Popular Commentary of the Bible

New Testament
Vol. I

PAUL E. KRETZMANN

FAMILY OF FAITH LIBRARY
0000 0265

Property of
FAMILY OF FAITH
LIBRARY

DATE DUE

Property of
FAMILY OF FAITH
LIBRARY

PALESTINE
At The
TIME OF CHRIST.
A. H. EILERS & CO. PUBLISHERS
ST. LOUIS. MO.
The circles, with
JERUSALEM.
as centre are twenty five miles
apart.
SYRIA
Sidon
Sarepta
Tyre
R. Abana
DAMASCUS
R. Pharpar
Mount
HERMON
R. Jordan
ITUREA
TRACHONITIS
TETRARCHY OF PHILIP
CESAREA
Philippi
GAULANITIS
AURANITIS
Ptolemais
R. Kishon
Cape Carmel
Chorazin
Bethsaida
Capernaum
SEA OF GALILEE
Magdala
Dalmanutha
Tiberias
Gergesa
Cana
Nazareth
MT. TABOR
COUNTRY OF THE GADARENES
R. Yarmuck
Gadara
Nain
MT. GILBOA
DECAPOLIS
CAESAREA
PALAESTINA
Bethshean
Pella
Bostra
Aenon
Salim
RIVER JORDAN
Gerasa
R. Jabbock
Samaria
Shechem
Sychar
MT. EBAL
Anupatris
MT. GERIZIM
Bethabara
Joppa
MT. GILEAD
Lydda
Ephraim
Rabbath
Ammon
Jamnia
Ramah
Jericho
Arimathea
Emmaus
Bethany
JERUSALEM
Julias
MT. PISGAH
Azotus
Ascalon
Bethlehem
Hebron
Gaza
Juttah
R. Arnon
Machaerus
Kerioth
Beersheba
HILL COUNTRY OF JUDEA
WILDERNESS
THE DEAD SEA
THE GREAT SEA
PROVINCE OF JUDEA
PEREA
MOAB
35°
30°
36°
33
32
30

Popular Commentary of the Bible

THE NEW TESTAMENT

Volume I

The Gospel according to Saint Matthew
The Gospel according to Saint Mark
The Gospel according to Saint Luke
The Gospel according to Saint John
The Acts of the Apostles

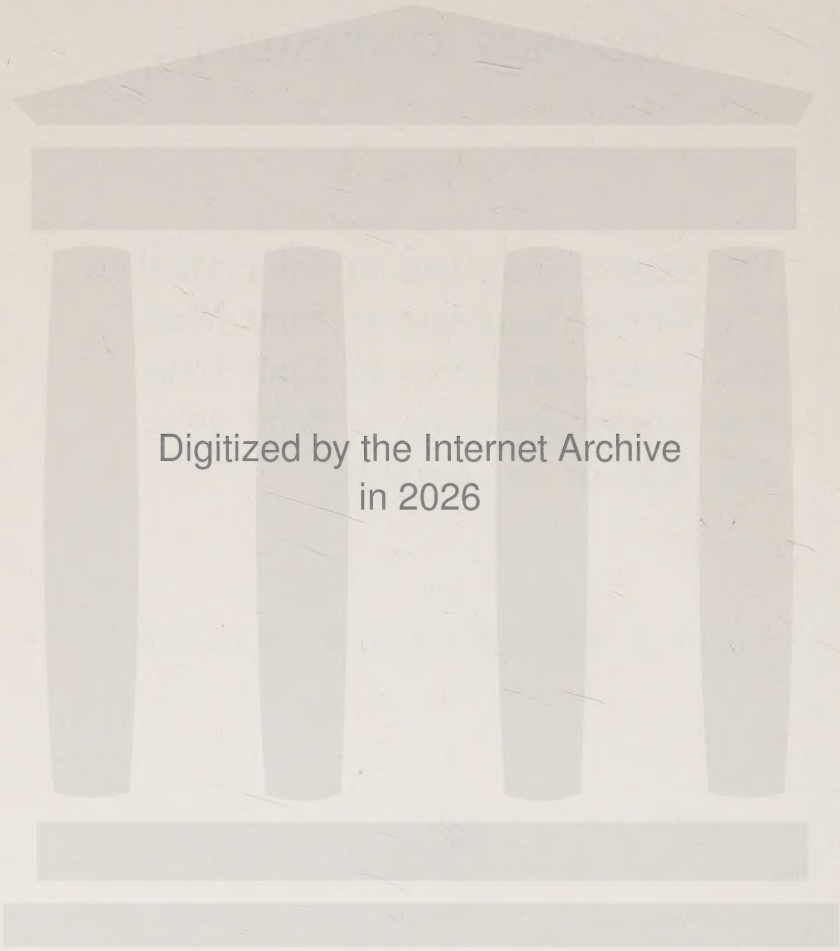
By

PAUL E. KRETZMANN, M.A., Ph.D., B.D.

Fourth Printing

ST. LOUIS, MO.
CONCORDIA PUBLISHING HOUSE

PRINTED IN U. S. A.


Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2026

https://archive.org/details/popularcommentar0001paul_i8a2

FOREWORD.

Four hundred years ago, in the fall of 1521, Dr. Martin Luther, in the seclusion of Wartburg Castle, conceived the stupendous task of translating the Bible into the vernacular of his country. Through the performance of this astounding work Luther removed the Book of Books from the library and study of the scholar and placed it where the divine Author of the Word desired it to be, in the hands of the people. Luther has made the Bible a *popular book,* studied, understood, and loved by all.

The Bible is a clear book, the clearest and simplest of all books found the world over. Its style is popular, its language that of every-day life. Its profoundest truths are expressed in terse, pithy sentences, composed of simple, home-spun words; its grandest lessons are clothed in diction that commends them to the child as well as to the sage. God has suited it to the understanding of all men because He intended it for all, as humanity's choicest gift and blessing. By its very purpose the Bible is a clear book, a popular book, the Book of books.

No one appreciated this fact more than the great Reformer of the Church. If Luther at one time voiced the wish that all books might perish, it was not because he despised books, but because he desired the Bible to be recognized and read as the profoundest, worthiest, and holiest of books. Notwithstanding, Luther, even while translating the Bible into the vernacular, published commentaries on the Bible, and continued to write commentaries until his death. In a larger sense all the writings of Luther are explications of Bible-truths. His sermons, lectures, epistles, his confessions and polemics, are centered and grounded in the Bible. In his own judgment his manifold works possessed value only in so far as they interpreted, set forth, and impressed the sacred verities of God's Word. Luther was a disciple of Christ by the Bible, of the Bible, and for the Bible, the staunchest believer in the Bible as the only source and norm of faith. Luther wrote in order that Holy Writ might be universally read.

To this very hour the Lutheran Church, following in the footsteps of its great teacher, cherishes the lesson which Luther expounded to the world. Her motto is to this day: *Sola Scriptura,* the Bible alone. By the grace of God the Lutheran Church has remained the Bible Church. There is no duty which she urges more than that of searching the Scriptures; there is no task which she performs more devoutly and conscientiously than that of teaching the Bible; there is no distinction which she covets more than that of being faithful to the Bible; there is no principle for which she would shed her blood more willingly than for that of *Sola Scriptura.*

Four hundred years after Luther's sojourn at Wartburg Castle, in the fall of 1921, the Church of Luther in America offers to the world a new commentary on the Bible. In itself there is nothing unusual about this. Ever since Luther's time, yes, ever since the time of the apostles, hundreds of commentaries have been given to the Christian public in all lands. Within the Lutheran Church alone the range of exe-

getical literature is tremendous. Nevertheless we claim that the offer of the Lutheran Church in publishing a Bible commentary is something unusual. Dr. Kretzmann's POPULAR COMMENTARY possesses a unique distinction. It is not a scientific or critical commentary in the sense in which these terms are usually employed. It contains no detailed discussions of grammatical technicalities, of etymology, of variations in the manuscripts, and of heterodox opinions. Its aims are practical; it is a commentary for the people. Its purpose is to open to the common people the portals to the marvelous treasure-house of God's wisdom, not in order that people might admire the golden portals, but that they might adore the divine fulness of God's wisdom and truth. The POPULAR COMMENTARY is a Lutheran commentary composed in the spirit of Luther, whose one paramount desire was to have all people read and understand, believe and live the Bible. It is a commentary such as Luther would have written, had he lived in America to-day, a commentary of the Bible and for the Bible.

However, not only the spirit, but also the content of the POPULAR COMMENTARY is Lutheran to the core. Dr. Kretzmann's commentary reproduces Luther, his theology and religion, his faith and piety. During the four hundred years since Luther bequeathed to the world his popular Bible, scores of teachers have, under the name of Luther, given to the reading public hundreds of commentaries which Luther would have denounced as begotten of the devil, had he lived to see them. Rationalism and Higher Criticism have outraged the Bible also within the Lutheran Church. At this writing there is hardly a commentary even within the Lutheran Church which perfectly reproduces Luther's theology and sets forth the pure, unadulterated Lutheran doctrine. Dr. Kretzmann's commentary does not belong to this class. It offers to Lutheran Christians nothing but sound Scripture doctrine on the basis of the soundest, believing, Biblical scholarship. Because of this we claim that the POPULAR COMMENTARY possesses unique distinction. It is a popular commentary in the truest sense of the term; a commentary for the people, and offering to the people nothing but unalloyed exposition of the Bible.

While Dr. Kretzmann's POPULAR COMMENTARY is a popular commentary, it is at the same time a learned commentary. Since it is to serve not only Christian fathers and mothers in their homes, but also teachers in Christian day-schools and Sunday-schools, and pastors in the preparation of their instructions and addresses, every means has been utilized to render all explanations scientifically correct and reliable. The exposition is entirely from the Greek and Hebrew text; the chief peculiarities of language and grammar are carefully noted, and the latest lexicographical researches have been freely consulted. In many instances a literal rendering into English or an exact transcription of the original text brings out the grammatical construction and the force of the original. The interpretation is based upon the original text, as the best manuscripts offer it, and wherever two readings are equally attested, they both receive consideration in order that full justice might be done to the words of the text. Besides this, the commentary contains other commendable features. Care has been taken to explain all historical references and to supplement them from profane history, while all geographical and archeological references receive proper attention, objections on the part of Higher Criticism being briefly, but ably confuted. In the *excursus,* which are found at the end of many chapters, doctrinal, ethical, and social questions are thoroughly discussed, and the many footnotes offer references for further study, while the bibliographical indications may serve for advanced work. In short, nothing has been omitted that might make the POPULAR COMMENTARY valuable as a reliable and exhaustive work of reference. And all this vast and varied material is offered to the reader in the most lucid form possible. The discourse is connected, and the Bible-text is interwoven with the com-

mentary proper, thus offering a chain of continuous paragraphs, full of sparkling, precious thoughts, expressed in idiomatic and elegant English. At no place is the reader awed by a display of erudition; yet the professionally trained reader will promptly recognize the scholarliness of the running comment, and feel that what is offered him is sound truth based upon painstaking research and true scholarship.

The publishers have done well in engaging the services of Dr. Kretzmann, who came into the work with a splendid preparatory training, and whose faith and piety manifest themselves by his humble submission to God's holy Word and his outspoken recognition of the invaluable services of Luther, Stoeckhardt, and the great orthodox leaders of the Lutheran Church. As a Christian and a scholar Dr. Kretzmann has performed the task entrusted to him with unswerving fidelity and in the spirit of the great Reformer, who in all his teaching sought to teach nothing but the Bible.

May, therefore, the blessings of God rest upon the POPULAR COMMENTARY as it goes forth to herald the Word of Life, and may it help many toward gaining a better understanding of the Holy Scriptures as they bask in the light of divine wisdom! If it will lead but a single soul into the Bible, and through the Bible to Christ, and through Christ to the glorious inheritance which awaits the saints in heaven, both the author and the publishers regard themselves as abundantly recompensed for their efforts on behalf of a deeper and more intense study of the Book of Books.

St. Louis, Mo., November 9, 1921.

JOHN THEODORE MUELLER.

TABLE OF CONTENTS.

PAGE

The Gospel according to Saint Matthew ..... 1—163
The Gospel according to Saint Mark ..... 163—258
The Gospel according to Saint Luke ..... 258—403
The Gospel according to Saint John ..... 403—531
The Acts of the Apostles ..... 532—674

Special Articles and Excursus: —

The Virgin Birth 6
The Obligation of a Rightful Betrothal 7
The Baptism of John 16
The Jewish Synagog 22
The Significance of the Sermon on the Mount 41
The "Son of Man" 47
Roman Government and Tax Collection in Palestine 53
Miracles 60
The Observance of Sunday 71
Christ's Sphere of Activity in His Prophetic Office 86
The Primacy of Peter 91
The Call of the Gospel 113
The Pharisees and Sadducees 131
The Baptism of Children 162
The Sin against the Holy Ghost 179
Demoniac Possession 192
The Mode of Baptism 204
The Enrolment of Quirinius 278
The Obligation of the Work of Atonement 403
The Deity of Jesus 413
The Logos of the Prolog 414
"The Flesh of the Son of Man" 447
A Tabellary Harmony of the Gospel-story 520
The Early History of Paul's Life 582
The Trustworthiness of Luke as a Historian 606
Vision, Dream, and Revelation 618
A Summary of the Latter Part of Paul's Life 674
A Brief History of English Bible Translations 675

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO SAINT MATTHEW.

INTRODUCTION.

The apostle and evangelist Matthew, the author of the first synoptic Gospel, had been a publican, bearing the name of Levi, the son of Alphaeus, in or near the city of Capernaum, before his conversion, Matt. 10, 3. He was sitting at the receipt of custom when Jesus called him, Matt. 9, 9; Mark 2, 14. 15; Luke 5, 27—29. There can be no doubt as to the identity of the former publican Levi and the later apostle Matthew, from a comparison of the parallel passages as well as from the established custom of the Jews to adopt a new name upon the occasion of some important happening in their lives. Cp. Acts 4, 36; 12, 12; 13, 9. It is evident throughout the Gospel that the author was a Jewish Christian of Palestine, whose familiarity with the Roman method of tax collection indicates an intimate knowledge of the publican's work. Within the circle of the apostles, Matthew was never conspicuous. His was the quiet, unostentatious content of the disciple happy in the companionship of his Lord. Of his activity after the ascension of Christ only so much is recorded that he was engaged as missionary among the Jews of Palestine. Tradition has it that he spent the last years of his life in proclaiming the Gospel in Ethiopia and other heathen countries and died at an advanced age.

The purpose of the Gospel according to Matthew is indicated in almost every section of the book. He wrote for his fellow-countrymen, not, indeed, in the Hebrew or Aramaic language, as some have thought,[1] but in Greek, the common language of the Orient in those days. His object was to show the glorious culmination of Old Testament type and prophecy, to prove that Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Rod out of the stem of Jesse, is the promised Messiah, that His entire life, passion, death, and resurrection is the fulfilment of the Old Covenant. The genealogical table establishing the claim that Jesus is the Son of David, the continual reference to the Old Testament, the frequent repetition of the phrase "That it might be fulfilled," furnish abundant evidence for this. It is the principal fact which the author wishes to impress upon his hearers.

So far as the date of the Gospel is concerned, it appears from chapter 27, 8; 28, 15 that it was written some time after the events there recorded. It seems evident, also, that it was composed before the final destruction of Jerusalem, since the author, in that event, would undoubtedly have referred to the fulfilment of Christ's prophecy concerning the fate of that city. Ancient reports have it that Matthew's Gospel was the first to be written, and the date 60 A. D. has been suggested with some degree of plausibility. The fact that the later extensive missionary labors of Matthew precluded the leisure required for literary work makes it probable that he wrote while still living in Palestine and composed the Gospel at Jerusalem.

The authenticity of our Gospel cannot be called into question. Historical and textual considerations consistently uphold not only Matthew's authorship, but also the fact that this book is a part of the sacred canon and belongs to the inspired writings of the Bible. We may rest assured that we have to-day the Gospel as written by Matthew, one of the apostles of the Lord, in the same form in which he penned it by inspiration of the Holy Ghost.

The contents of the Gospel may be briefly summarized as follows. Matthew presents, first of all, a brief narrative of the nativity and the earliest childhood of Jesus. Then comes an account of the ministry of the Lord, which was ushered in with His baptism by John. The evangelist devotes the greater part of his Gospel to the work of the Savior in Galilee, in the course of which He also trained His disciples for the work of preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom, but which finally brought upon Him the increasing hatred of the Jews, and especially of their leaders. In the second part of the Gospel there is a detailed account of the Savior's last journey to Jerusalem, of His last sermons and miracles, of His sufferings, death, and resurrection. The Gospel closes with the great missionary command of the Lord and His comforting assurance: "Behold, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world!"

1) See Schaller, *Book of Books*, § 180.

CHAPTER 1.

The Legal Genealogical Table of Christ.

Matt. 1, 1—17.

V. 1. The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham. This is the title, or caption, which Matthew places at the head of his book. The entire Gospel is a book of the generation of Jesus Christ in the sense which the Jews usually attached to the expression in similar connections, meaning an account of the chief events in a person's life, more or less briefly related, Gen. 5, 1; 6, 9; 37, 2; 2, 4; Num. 3, 1. The evangelist offers a history of the birth, acts, suffering, death, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. But the first verses are a genealogy in the most restricted sense of the term, as presenting a table of Christ's legal forefathers through His foster-father Joseph, rightful heir of the kingdom, the thought most interesting to Jewish Christians. Matthew calls Jesus the Son of David, the king of the Golden Age of the Jewish people, to whose family the promise of the Savior was at last restricted, 2 Sam. 7, 12. 13; Ps. 89, 3. 4; 132, 11; Is. 11, 1; Jer. 23, 5. Christ was prophesied under the very name of "David," Ezek. 34, 23. 24; 37, 24. 25. "Son of David" was the official title which the Jews applied to the expected Messiah, Matt. 9, 27; 12, 23; 21, 9; under this designation they had been led, by prophetic authority, to expect Him. But it would also arouse the attention and hold the interest of Christians of Jewish descent to know that the Christ whom Matthew proclaimed was the son of Abraham, for they knew that the father of their race had received the promise of the Lord: "In thee and thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed," Gen. 12, 3; 18, 18; 22, 18. "For this reason he refers only to those two fathers, Abraham and David, since to these two alone the promise of Christ was made in these people. Therefore Matthew emphasizes the promises to Abraham and David, because he has a definite intention with regard to this nation, in order that he might influence them, as heirs of the promise, in a charming manner, to accept the Christ prophesied to them and to believe that this man was Jesus whom they had crucified." 2)

The evangelist now offers the genealogy proper: **V. 2. Abraham begat Isaac; and Isaac begat Jacob; and Jacob begat Judas and his brethren; v. 3. and Judas begat Phares and Zara of Thamar; and Phares begat Esrom; and Esrom begat Aram; v. 4. and Aram begat Aminadab; and Aminadab begat Naasson; and Naasson begat Salmon; v. 5. and Salmon begat Booz of Rachab; and Booz begat Obed of Ruth; and Obed begat Jesse; v. 6. and Jesse begat David the king; and David the king begat Solomon of her that had been the wife of Urias; v. 7. and Solomon begat Roboam; and Roboam begat Abia; and Abia begat Asa; v. 8. and Asa begat Josaphat; and Josaphat begat Joram; and Joram begat Ozias; v. 9. and Ozias begat Joatham; and Joatham begat Achaz; and Achaz begat Ezekias; v. 10. and Ezekias begat Manasses; and Manasses begat Amon; and Amon begat Josias; v. 11. and Josias begat Jechonias and his brethren, about the time they were carried away to Babylon; v. 12. and after they were brought to Babylon, Jechonias begat Salathiel; and Salathiel begat Zorobabel; v. 13. and Zorobabel begat Abiud; and Abiud begat Eliakim; and Eliakim begat Azor; v. 14. and Azor begat Sadoc; and Sadoc begat Achim; and Achim begat Eliud; v. 15. and Eliud begat Eleazar; and Eleazar begat Matthan; and Matthan begat Jacob; v. 16. and Jacob begat Joseph, the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ.** In three sections of fourteen members each the progenitors of Joseph are tabulated, reaching back to Abraham, the father of the faithful. No person ever born into this world could boast, in a direct line, a more elevated or illustrious ancestry than Jesus Christ. The kingly, the priestly, the prophetic offices were represented in this list in all their glory and splendor. "The holy Matthew writes his Gospel in a most masterly manner and makes three distinctions of the fathers of whom Christ sprang forth, fourteen patriarchs, fourteen kings, and fourteen princes. . . . There are three times fourteen persons, as Matthew himself names them; from Abraham to David, both included, are fourteen persons or members; from David to the Babylonian captivity, again fourteen members; . . . and from the Babylonian captivity to Christ there are also fourteen members." 3)

A careful comparison of the list as here given and the account found in the Old Testament, 2 Chron. 22—26, shows a slight discrepancy, since Ahaziah, Joash, and Amaziah followed after Joram, before Uzziah. The explanation for this difficulty is found in the fact that Matthew took up the genealogies just as he found them in the public Jewish repositories, which, though in the main parts correct, were yet deficient in some respects. But the omission of the three kings was of no consequence to the evangelist's argument, which was to show the legal descent of Joseph, the foster-father of Jesus, and therefore of Jesus Himself, in an uninterrupted line from David, and consequently from Abraham. "What need is there of many words? Matthew himself shows sufficiently that he did not want to enumerate the generations with Jewish strictness, and so excite doubtfulness. For almost after the manner of a Jew he

2) Luther, St. Louis Edition, 7, 6.

3) Luther, 11, 2344.

makes three times fourteen members of fathers, kings, and princes, but with deliberate knowledge he omits three members of the second section, as though he would say: The genealogical tables are indeed not to be despised, but herein lies the chief thing that Christ is promised through the generations of Abraham and David." 4)

Another difficulty is in verse 11, where Josias is named as the father of Jechonias, whereas he was the grandfather, 1 Chron. 3, 14—16. The solution is found either by reference to the explanation above, showing that Matthew made use of a deliberate contraction, since the Jews were in the habit of extending the appellation "father" also to the grandparent; or we may adopt the marginal reading, which is based upon some Greek manuscripts: "Josias begat Jakim, and Jakim begat Jechonias." This would also yield the fourteenth member of this section, unless we include Jesus in this group. In a similar manner, though Jechonias had no brethren mentioned in Scriptures, his father had, and it is by no means unusual to find more remote relatives spoken of in this manner, Gen. 28, 13; 31, 42; 14, 14; 24, 27; 29, 15. "It is not to be supposed that the evangelist was at all concerned to make sure that no link in the line was omitted. His one concern would be to make sure that no name appeared that did not belong to the line." 5)

Another significant fact: Only four women are mentioned in the tables, and of these two were originally members of Gentile nations, Rachab and Ruth, and two were adulteresses, Thamar and Bathsheba. Note, also, that the last is not mentioned by name, the reference being both delicate and reproachful. "Of the kings and princes which Matthew enumerates, there were a few very bad knaves, as we read in the Book of Kings; yet God permits them to be entered as though they were so worthy that He should have wanted to be born of them. He also has no pious woman described: the four women that are mentioned here were all considered knaves and impious by the people, and regarded as evil women, as Thamar, who with Judas, her husband's father, begat Phares and Zara, as is written Gen. 38, 18; Rachab is called a knave or harlot, Josh. 2, 1; Ruth was a Gentile woman, Ruth 1, 4: though she was pious in honor, since one reads nothing evil of her, yet because she was a heathen, she was despised as a dog by the Jews and regarded as unworthy before the world; Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah, was an adulteress before David took her in marriage and begat Solomon with her, 2 Sam. 11, 4. All of which, beyond doubt, is enumerated for the reason that we should see how God desired to present to all sinners a mirror that Christ was sent to sinners and wanted to be born of sinners; yea, the greater the sinners, the greater the refuge they should have with the merciful God, Priest, and King, who is our Brother, in whom, and in none other besides, we may fulfil the Law and receive God's grace. For this He came from heaven and desires no more from us but only this, that we let Him be our God, Priest, and King. Then all shall be right and plain; through Him alone we become children of God and heirs of heaven." 6)

The table of Matthew ends with the words, v. 16 a: *And Jacob begat Joseph, the husband of Mary.* This fact, and the further circumstance that Luke, chapter 3, has an altogether different list of ancestors of Jesus, must be considered proof positive that we have in Matthew the genealogy of Joseph, the foster-father of Jesus. The aim of the evangelist therefore undoubtedly was to set forth Jesus as the legal son of Joseph, Mary's husband, at His birth, and as such the proper heir of David's throne. Joseph was, before the law, father of Jesus. All his rights and privileges, by reason of his birth and ancestry, were by law transferred to his son. As long as he lived, Joseph continued in his rôle as the legal paternal ancestor of Jesus, Matt. 13, 35; John 6, 42. In this way the name and position of Jesus, especially during His ministry, were put above reproach, Deut. 23, 2, and His claim as to being the heir of David's line was placed on a sound basis, even in the eyes of the sticklers for legal form.

Note the careful phraseology used by Matthew in this sentence, v. 16 b: *Mary, of whom was born Jesus.* Not from them both, as natural parents, after the usual manner of procreation, was the Savior begotten, but of Mary only, thus placing the event which Matthew is about to relate entirely outside of the course of nature, beyond the plane of human understanding. Jesus is her son's name, after the great work which He came into the world to perform, the salvation of mankind. And He is called the Christ, which has precisely the same meaning as the Hebrew Messiah: the Anointed of God. It was His official title according to His threefold office, as the legitimate descendant of David, which the genealogy showed Him to be. He alone is rightly, above all His fellows after the flesh, called the Christ; He is King of kings and Lord of lords: the great King, who governs the entire universe with His almighty power and reigns in the hearts of His followers with His benign mercy; He is the Prophet greater than Moses, with a message of truth and love and grace divine for all men; He is the great High Priest, who in His own body and by the shedding of His holy, precious blood made full atonement for the sins of the entire world.

Such is Matthew's introduction to his Gospel. And in concluding this genealogy, which immediately places Jesus the Christ into the center before the minds and hearts of his readers, he gives a brief summary according to the

4) Luther, 7, 7.

5) *Expositor's Greek Testament*, 1, 63.

6) Luther, 11, 2346.

divisions of Jewish history: V. 17. **So all the generations from Abraham to David are fourteen generations; from David until the carrying away into Babylon are fourteen generations; and from the carrying away into Babylon unto Christ are fourteen generations.** The three periods represent, respectively, the three forms of government which the Jews had: theocracy, monarchy, hierarchy, with judges, kings, and priests at their head. But, incidentally, the same division sums up Israel's fortunes. First came the age of slow and steady growth, with all the manifestations of the first love's zeal and fervor toward God, culminating in the reign of David. Then came the period of slow decline and gradual disintegration, ushered in with the luxurious reign of Solomon and characterized by the continuous and losing conflict with idolatry. And lastly came the period of a restored Church with internal ruin, of a dead orthodoxy, of an insipid ritualism. If any fact stands out clearly from this contrast, it is this, that redemption was most sorely and urgently needed.

The Annunciation to Joseph and the Birth of Jesus. Matt. 1, 18—25.

V. 18a. **Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise,** the evangelist writes. The reference is not so much to the actual process of generation, but expresses the general idea of origin. It was in this way that the Messiah assumed human nature, took upon Himself the form of our sinful flesh. As the Son of God He had no beginning, but is in the bosom of the Father from eternity, John 1, 18. As a human being He had a beginning, and this origin the evangelist relates: V. 18b. **When as His mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost.** Mary had entered into a betrothal, into a contract of espousal, with Joseph. She had agreed to a marriage, she had pledged her word to Joseph, just as he was bound to her by his promise of betrothment. While Mary was in this relation to Joseph, and after she had given him her pledge as his promised bride, she still lived at her own or at her father's house. As a rule, some time elapsed before a betrothed virgin was formally given in marriage and taken to her husband's house, Deut. 20, 7; Judg. 14, 7. 8; 15, 1. 2. During this time, cohabitation did not take place, though the marriage contract was legal and binding. And it was then, before the celebration of the nuptials, that Mary was found with child. Her situation was not only delicate, but the most distressing and humiliating which could fall to the lot of a pure maiden. Knowing herself to be innocent of even the slightest transgression in deed, and fully convinced of the fact that her condition was due only to the supernatural working of the Holy Ghost, she nevertheless could expect no one to believe her defense, should she attempt one. "Nothing but the fullest consciousness of her own integrity and the strongest confidence in God could have supported her in such circumstances, where her reputation, her honor, and her life were at stake." 7)

At this critical juncture, Joseph proved himself all that a true Christian should be: V. 19. **Then Joseph, her husband, being a just man, and not willing to make her a public example, was minded to put her away privily.** Unable to believe her innocent, which in the face of the evidence must have been beyond the average man's strength, he nevertheless found a way out of the difficult dilemma. As the betrothed husband he had the husband's rights and responsibilities. And he was a just man, righteous, a respecter of the Law, which was especially strict and uncompromising on the subject of infidelity in the woman, Deut. 22, 22—24. Yet he did not wish to expose Mary publicly and thus heap ignominy and shame upon her, for she was the woman to whom he had given the love of a husband. His humaneness and benevolence, his affection, were put to a severe test. But the result of his weighing the matter was that he did not choose strict measures, resolving rather upon a quiet cancelation of the bond of betrothal, without assigning a cause, in order that her life might be saved. Justice was tempered by mercy.

It was here that God interfered in behalf of the mother of His Son, according to His humanity: V. 20. **But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying: Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary, thy wife; for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost.** Joseph's mind was still busily engaged with the perplexing problem; he was wrestling with painful, distressing, distracting thoughts, and even his kind expedient may have seemed harsh to him. But, behold! — a vivid introduction of the angelic appearance to emphasize the intervention of God. In a dream the vision came to Joseph to save him and his betrothed from an act which would result in disastrous consequences. The appearance of an angel in a dream was one of the methods which God used to make known His will, or to reveal the future in special cases. The angel addresses Joseph, "Thou son of David," not to awaken the heroic mood, as has been suggested, but to emphasize the thought of the legal acknowledgment and adoption of the child. He should not fear to take home, publicly to accept, Mary as his wife. This simple acceptance of the angel's words meant for Joseph an act of faith similar to those performed by the great heroes of the Old Testament, to believe the Lord absolutely, in spite of all the evidences of the senses. This public recognition would save the honor of Mary and also that of her child. For instead of being the fruit of adulterous and licentious inter-

7) Clarke, *Commentary*, 5, 39.

course, the product of a most unholy cohabitation, the child which was to be born of her was of the Holy Ghost, begotten by deliberate intervention of God, against the course of nature.

The climax of the angel's message: V. 21. **And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call His name JESUS; for He shall save His people from their sins.** It was thus ordained in God's counsel: She will give birth to a son, she is to become a mother, not only by supernatural interposition, not merely by God's giving new life to organs that were past the age of bearing, as was true in the case of Sarah and Elizabeth, Gen. 18, 10—14; Luke 1, 7, 13. 18, but by a miraculous suspension of the usual process of nature, according to which men are born of the will of the flesh and of the will of man, both sexes being active. And this son of Mary he, Joseph, was to call Jesus. This is a command in the form of a prediction. By giving to the child His name, Joseph would publicly recognize and formally adopt Him as his legal son. **Jesus** is to be the child's name, not indeed as a mere appellation to distinguish Him from other people, as in the case of the Hebrew synonym Joshua, Num. 13, 17; Zech. 3, 1, but as an expression of the very essence of the divine personality, through which the salvation of men would be gained. For the angel explains the name: He shall save His people from their sins. That, in a sentence, is the end and object of His coming, that alone is His errand and mission: He, and no other, He alone, and He completely, saves. He brings full pardon, free salvation, complete deliverance, not only from the pollution and power, but also from the guilt of sin. To His people He brings this priceless boon, not merely to the members of His nation according to the flesh, to the Jewish people, but to all that are in need of a Savior, Matt. 18, 11. This is the Gospel-message, not that Jesus makes allowances for sin, but that He has made atonement for it; not that He tolerates sin, but that He destroys it.

Matthew now adds an explanatory note to show the fulfilment of the Old Testament types and prophecies in the person and work of Christ: V. 22. **Now all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying,** v. 23. **Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son; and they shall call His name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us.** It was not an incident that just happened that way which the evangelist records, but an occurrence definitely decided upon and fully planned by the Lord centuries before. For it was He that spoke the prophecy through Isaiah, chapter 7, 14. The words as written by the prophet referred to a sign or miracle which the Lord promised King Ahaz in order to assure him that the counsels of the enemies of Israel should not stand, but that the latter should finally be utterly discomfited. In giving this sign, the Lord had in mind the spiritual Israel and its enemies, the deliverance being the redemption wrought by the Messiah. Before the eternal God, the space of seven hundred years is as a watch in the night. This sign was now to be given and the prophecy fulfilled. The virgin, not any virgin, but the one designated and chosen by God, being with child, was now about to bear a son. And they, not only His parents, but men and people that would know Him, especially those that would accept His salvation, would call His name Emmanuel: God with us. In the son of Mary these words were fulfilled, her son is God Himself; in His person the strong God, the almighty Lord, is with us, not according to His condemning justice, but according to His loving-kindness and tender mercies, Is. 9, 6; John 1, 1. 14; 1 Tim. 3, 16.

The result of the angelic vision: V. 24. **Then Joseph, being raised from sleep, did as the angel of the Lord had bidden him, and took unto him his wife.** As soon as he awoke from sleep, he was immediately, energetically active and set about to act upon the divine instructions. He took Mary home as his wife, he celebrated the betrothal with all customary Jewish ceremonies. She who was his wife by betrothal now was given this position in the eyes of the whole world. But the marriage was not consummated at that time: V. 25. **And knew her not till she had brought forth her first-born son: and he called His name Jesus.** Joseph did not enter into the natural relations of marriage with Mary until her son, the promised Messiah, had been born. It is a moot question whether Mary and Joseph ever lived together in the usual matrimonial intercourse and begot children. The Roman Catholic theologians and a great many Protestant commentators argue with much spirit that the first-born son of Mary was her only son. Some have held with one of the early Church Fathers that the "brethren" of Jesus mentioned in various passages, Matt. 12, 46; 13, 55; Mark 3, 31; Luke 8, 19; John 2, 12; 7, 5; Acts 1, 14; Gal. 1, 19, were the cousins of the Lord, the sons of Alphaeus, Joseph's brother, and of Mary, the wife of Alphaeus, the sister-in-law (not sister) of the mother of the Lord. Others have held that they were the stepbrothers of Jesus, by a former marriage of Joseph. As a matter of fact, the question is of little import and can have no doctrinal significance. It is not for historical, exegetical, or dogmatic reasons, but only for motives of reverence that men have been prompted to insist upon the alleged fact of Mary's perpetual virginity.[8]

The evangelist concludes the narrative by stating that he, Joseph, called the name of Mary's son Jesus, thus following the divine command, assuming the legal paternity of the child, and incidentally expressing his hopeful belief in the Savior of mankind.

---

8) See Schaller, *Book of Books*, § 276.

Summary. *Jesus Christ, the son and legal heir of David, beyond whom His genealogy can be traced to Abraham, the father of the faithful of all times, was conceived and born of Mary, the virgin mother, after Joseph, His foster-father, had been instructed through a wonderful angelic vision as to God's interposition.*

THE VIRGIN BIRTH.

For about eighteen centuries after the ascension of Christ and the founding of the Christian Church the fact of the virgin birth was not called into question and the comforting doctrines drawn therefrom were universally accepted. Throughout the Christian Church the words of the Apostolic Creed: "Who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary," were confessed and believed. But the era of rationalism, of believing only what reason admitted to be true, ushered in a new conception of Bible criticism, and this played havoc with our doctrine. One critic attacked the idea of a supernatural origin of Jesus and tried to find a natural explanation of the event. Another declared that Joseph was the father of Jesus. A third calmly treated the stories of Christ's nativity as myths. In this manner, the entire Bible account was soon discredited, both the fact of the virgin birth and the doctrine of the necessity of the sinless birth of the Savior being denied. It is stated that the modern world cannot believe in, and therefore has no place for, miracles. This standpoint evidently overthrows the entire Bible and the history of the Church, both of which are replete with miracles. Some have maintained that the virgin birth has no doctrinal significance anyway, not the physical basis of Christ's existence, but the moral and spiritual character of His personality being involved in redemption. But such statements reveal the fact that they are very well aware of the vital connection between the doctrine of the virgin birth and faith in the divinity of Christ. A third class of critics favors the mythological explanation, declaring that legends and myths have ever sprung up in connection with the development of all religions. Unfortunately the critics themselves disagree, some of them assuming a Hebrew, others a Greek, others an Indian origin of the story. Besides, their examples are poorly chosen, a divine paternity by carnal intercourse being assumed in the majority of cases. And a recent writer has shown all these theories to be untenable and not analogous, besides referring to the fact that the heathen myths in connection with such stories are of an incredibly vile and immoral character, while nothing can equal the simple, chaste, convincing language of the Bible narrative. The final argument of the critics that historical and textual criticism has proved consecutive editing of New Testament stories and the presence of material foreign to essential Gospel sources, reveals the intention they are anxious to put into execution, namely, to destroy the faith of Christians in the truthfulness of the Bible story.

Let us, in combating these attacks, rely upon the weapon which Christ Himself indicated to us, namely: "It is written." It is plainly written, Is. 7, 14. that the Messiah should be born of a virgin, for the Hebrew word there used, both according to its etymology and according to usage, designates not merely a "woman of marriageable age," but a virgin, a maiden that has not known man. Dr. Stoeckhardt has proved this meaning even in the passage Prov. 30, 18—20.[9]) The virgin birth is most decidedly taught in the passage above, Matt. 1, 20—25, as well as in Luke 1, 34. 35. It agrees, moreover, with the prophecy, Gen. 3, 15, where the Seed of the Woman alone is named as the crusher of the Serpent's head. It finds its final confirmation in the fact that St. Paul refers to it in the most self-evident way, when he speaks of the Son of God as having been made of a woman, Gal. 4, 4.

In the light of these plain passages we have every reason to say: "Therefore these learned men and critics are the falsifiers, visionaries, and writers of legends, not the apostles and evangelists. Their historico-critical research is plain fraud. From the view-point of their unbelief, indeed, they cannot do otherwise. Theirs is the experience of the Jews: With seeing eyes they see nothing, and with hearing ears they hear nothing, and they have their reward. The devil thanks them for it." [10])

We shall retain the doctrine of the virgin birth as a necessary part of our faith. We believe that it is essential for a full appreciation of the supernatural, the divine character of the Savior. "In order to constitute a divine-human personality, the divine Being had to enter into the procreative depths of humanity and select and assume a human nature of His formation and purifying, and unite Himself personally with it. It must be bone of our bone, flesh of our flesh, soul of our soul, in order to be organically connected with the human race; but it must be our nature lifted out of itself, separated, purified, transmuted — a human nature that, strangely and mysteriously enough, could be 'tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin.'" [11]) Christ "indeed is become a real, true, natural man, but not conceived and born in sins, as other children of Adam. For that reason His mother had to be a virgin whom no man had touched, in order that He might not be conceived and born under the curse, but without sin, and the devil might have no right or power over Him. . . . Such mercy we celebrate to-day in order to thank God that He purified our unclean, unholy conception and birth through His holy conception and birth, took the curse from us, and brought the blessing upon us. We by nature have a filthy, sinful conception and birth, but Christ has a pure, holy conception and birth, and through His holy conception and birth our unclean nature, flesh, and blood are blessed and sanctified." [12]) The fact of the sinless humanity of Christ, guaranteed to us by the virgin birth, made His being placed under the Law, His perfect fulfilment of the Law, and thus His entire work of redemption possible.

---

9) *Der Prophet Jesaias. Die ersten zwoelf Kapitel*, 84. Clarke, *Commentary*, 5, 40.

10) *Synodalbericht*, Mo. Syn., Mich. Dist., 1904, 29.

11) Keyser, *The Rational Test*, 97. 98.

12) Luther, 13, 2676. 2679. Cp. Pieper, *Christliche Dogmatik*, 2, 76. 77.

THE OBLIGATION OF A RIGHTFUL BETROTHAL.

In view of the fact that the modern conception of the marriage-tie is rapidly sinking to the level of the heathen idea in its most immoral manifestations, and that playing with the sanctity of the marriage-bond has become the order of the day, it is necessary to emphasize the Scriptural view of the obligation of a valid betrothal, as indicated in the text above, vv. 18—20. To maintain that passages of this kind have historical value only, that they therefore concern the Jews alone, and that their commands are not binding upon the Christians of to-day, is inconsistent with the demand which properly makes the Bible the rule of life as well as the norm of doctrine.

A rightful betrothal is entered upon when one man and one woman, being of marriageable age and not hindered by Scriptural or legal impediments, with the express or implied consent of their parents or guardians, and by their own free mutual consent, promise to be and remain to each other husband and wife in a lifelong union. That is the Scriptural view of a valid betrothal. And such a betrothal, without considering the Jewish police and church regulations, is, according to the Bible, tantamount to a marriage, so far as the insolubility of the marriage tie is concerned. When Lot was urged to make haste out of the doomed city of Sodom, he was sent by the angels to speak to his "sons-in-law that would marry his daughters," who were betrothed to them and intended to consummate the marriage later, Gen. 19, 14. When Jacob, with the will and consent of the parents on either side, Gen. 28, 2; 29, 18. 19, was betrothed to Rachel, the daughter of Laban, he spoke of her as his "wife" before the nuptials had been celebrated, Gen. 29, 21. Both of these events took place before the Jewish church law was in existence. A similar case is that recorded in our passage. When Mary was "espoused to Joseph, before they came together," Joseph is called her "husband," and she is called his "wife." And in Luke 2, 5 Mary is called Joseph's "espoused wife." Cp. Luke 1, 27; Deut. 22, 22—29; 28, 30; Hos. 4, 13.

In addition to these clear and unmistakable passages we have another reason for considering a rightful betrothal tantamount to marriage, and that is by analogy from the parts of Holy Scriptures, both of the Old and New Testaments, in which the union of Christ and His Church is spoken of. We find throughout these passages that the terms "espoused" or "bride" (the equivalent, in the original text, of the German "Braut," a betrothed woman) and "wife" are used as synonyms and altogether indiscriminately. The great "mystery" concerning Christ and His Church, Eph. 5, 32, would lose its meaning if betrothal and marriage, as spoken of in the Word of God, were not identical. "For thy Maker is thy husband; the Lord of Hosts is His name," Is. 54, 5. "Thou shalt no more be termed forsaken; neither shall thy land any more be termed desolate; but thou shalt be called Hephzibah and thy land Beulah; for the Lord delighteth in thee, and thy land shall be married. For as a young man marrieth a virgin, so shall thy sons marry thee; and as the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee," Is. 62, 4. 5. "I will betroth thee unto Me forever; yea, I will betroth thee unto Me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in loving-kindness, and in mercies," Hos. 2, 19. "Come with Me from Lebanon, My spouse," Song of Solomon 4, 8—12. "He that hath the bride is the bridegroom," John 3, 29. "And I, John, saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. . . . Come hither, I will show thee the bride, the Lamb's wife," Rev. 21, 2. 9. Compare with these passages also the following: "The marriage of the Lamb is come, and His wife hath made herself ready," Rev. 19, 7. "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the Church," Eph. 5, 25, and the many statements in which lack of loyalty and faithfulness in the people of Israel is compared to adultery. A passage which is especially clear is 2 Cor. 11, 2.

In view of these facts there is but one conclusion: "A valid betrothal, the lawful and unconditional mutual consent of a marriageable man and a marriageable woman to be husband and wife, makes the parties to such compact essentially husband and wife before God. . . . The rescission of lawful espousals or valid betrothal is unlawful desertion from the marriage-bond as truly as after the consummation of marriage." 13) "Apart from the doctrine of Scriptures regarding the obligation of the betrothal, if we only look at the engagement as we have it to-day and judge according to reason, that is, according to the natural moral understanding, we must consider the engagement as we have it to-day, with respect to its obligation, as tantamount to the consummated marriage." 14)

13) *Theol. Quart.*, 2, 350; 3, 408.

14) *Lehre und Wehre*, 1915, 242. Cp. Jahn, *Von der Verlobung*, 43; Luther, 10, 655; Kretzmann, *Keuschheit und Zucht*, 76. 77; *Theol. Quart.*, 20, 136—143.

CHAPTER 2.

The Wise Men from the East.

Matt. 2, 1—12.

V. 1a. Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, in the days of Herod the king. The transition which the evangelist employs fitly connects the narrative of the circumstances surrounding the birth of the Savior with the story of the adoration of the Magi. It is an account of the "reception given by the world to the new-born Messianic king. Homage from afar, hostility at home; foreshadowing the fortunes of the new faith: acceptance by the Gentiles, rejection by the Jews." 15) While Matthew does not fix the time of the nativity so exactly as Luke, chapter 2, 1. 2, he nevertheless

15) *Expositor's Greek Testament*, 1, 69.

mentions a very important point which corroborates the Old Testament prophecy in a most remarkable manner. For Herod was king at this time. History calls him Herod the Great, since he was great in political sagacity, great in diplomatic shrewdness, great in energy which expended itself in works of external beauty and grandeur, but also great, almost incredibly so, in wickedness. He was the son of the Idumean Antipater, Roman procurator of Judea. His ambition succeeded in winning for him the governorship of Galilee when he was but twenty-five years of age. He next became governor of Coele-Syria, the fertile valley between the Lebanon and Anti-Lebanon mountain ranges, including southern Syria and Decapolis, and later was made tetrarch by the Roman triumvir Antony. Driven from his province, where his standing with the people had always been insecure, by the Maccabean Antigonus, Herod fled to Rome, gained the help of Antony and Augustus, and was declared king of Judea by the Roman senate, 714 years after the founding of Rome, 37 B. C. It was necessary for him to win his kingdom by force of arms, but once in possession of it, he proceeded to use his power in a cruel and ruthless manner for his own aggrandizement. He flattered the influential party of the Pharisees by the erection of the magnificent Temple and by other feigned tokens of religious zeal; he courted the favor of Rome by a fawning servility, by various concessions to heathenism, and by the introduction of Grecian customs. Of his ten wives, he executed the Asmonean Mariamne, daughter of Hircanus, and he caused three of his sons, Antipater, Alexander, and Aristobulus, to be put to death, not to mention a multitude of other executions which were as cruel as they were unjustified. By such a degree of bloodthirstiness was his reign characterized that the slaughter of the innocents at Bethlehem is omitted by secular historians as an insignificant episode. Such was the character of Herod the Great. And by the final definite establishment of his kingdom the word of the Lord was fulfilled: "The scepter shall not depart from Judah . . . until Shiloh come," Gen. 49, 10. Cp. Gen. 27, 40. "In the first place, the evangelist cites Herod the king to remind of the prophecy of Jacob the patriarch, who had said, Gen. 49, 10: The scepter shall not be taken from Judah, nor a teacher out of his loins, until He comes that should come. From this prophecy it is evident that Christ must put in His appearance when the kingdom or government was taken from the Jews, that no king or ruler out of the tribe of Judah occupied it. That was done through this Herod, who was not from the tribe of Judah nor from the blood of the Jews, but of Edom, a stranger, established as a king of the Jews by the Romans; however, with great indignation of the Jews, so that he ground himself against them for thirty years, shed very much blood, and killed the best of the Jews, until he stunned and vanquished them. When this stranger, then, had ruled for thirty years and brought the government into his power, so that he sat in tranquillity, and the Jews had yielded, since there was no more hope to get rid of him and therefore the prophecy of Jacob was fulfilled, then the time had come, then Christ came and was born under the first stranger, and appeared according to the prophecy. As though He would say: The scepter has ceased from Judah, a stranger is sitting over My people; now is the time that I enter and also become king, the government now pertains to Me."[16]

In Bethlehem of Judea, Jesus was born, in accordance with prophetic utterance. This Bethlehem is distinguished from another village of the same name in Galilee, in the former tribe of Zebulun, Josh. 19, 15. The town of Christ's birth is called Bethlehem-Judah, 1 Sam. 17, 12, and Ephrath or Ephratah, Gen. 48, 7; Micah 5, 2. It is situated on a small ridge or declivity overlooking a fertile farming country, whence its name, which signifies "house of bread," may have been suggested. It was a fitting name for the village which produced as its greatest son Him who is properly called the "Bread of Life," John 6, 35. 48.

Place and time of the nativity having been indicated, the evangelist now proceeds: V. 1b. **Behold, there came wise men from the East to Jerusalem.** He introduces the new theme in a lively manner, also for the purpose of bringing out the contrast between the reigning king of Judea and these strangers from heathen lands. Wise men, or, more literally, Magi, he calls them, not kings, as the medieval legend has it, but the scientists of those days who, at many a court, formed the king's privy council, Jer. 39, 3; Dan. 2, 48. They cultivated chiefly medicine, natural science, especially in its occult applications, the interpretation of dreams, astronomy, and astrology. "Therefore the Magi, or wise men, were not kings, but learned and expert people in natural science. . . . The Magi were nothing else than what the philosophers were in Greece and the priests in Egypt, and such men as are with us the learned men of the universities; in short, they were the theologians and the learned men of Arabia Felix, just as if ecclesiastics and learned men from universities would now be sent to a prince."[17] Magi from the East they were, and Matthew probably used the vague indication of the locality intentionally. It matters little whether the men were from Arabia, or from Persia, or from Media, or from Babylon, or from Parthia. A tradition among the Jews has it that there were prophets in the kingdom of Saba and Arabia that were of the posterity of Abraham by Keturah, who transmitted the promise of God given to Abraham from one generation to the next. All this signifies nothing. But all the more important is the fact that these strangers from a far country

16) Luther, 11, 296.
17) Luther, 11, 299.

come to Jerusalem on such an extraordinary errand. "Him whom His own would not seek or acknowledge, nor the inhabitants and citizens, this strange, foreign people sought in so many days' journeying. To Him to whom the learned men and priests would not come and worship, to Him the soothsayers and astronomers come. That was truly a great disgrace for the entire Jewish land and people that Christ was born in the midst of them and they should first learn of it from strange, heathen, foreign people." 18)

The message of the Magi was brief: V. 2. **Saying, Where is He that is born King of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the East, and are come to worship Him.** There was an assertion contained in their question. Their knowledge was definite as to His having been born. It was a fact beyond question or discussion. A Child has been born that is King of the Jews; His kingship is even now established beyond a doubt. The evidence which the Magi adduce for their belief is sensational. They had seen a star in its rising, just as soon as the phenomenon became visible; not any star, not a meteor provided for the occasion, not a comet of peculiar brilliance, not an extraordinary conjunction of planets, but His star, a star which was set in the firmament, or which flashed forth at just this time with unusual brightness. The appearance and, according to verse 9, also the guidance of this star was to them a definite sign, an unmistakable token of the fulfilment of a prophecy, tradition, or revelation which was known to them. It may have been that the prophecy of Balaam, Num. 24, 17, had been explained by their teachers as referring to an actual, physical star, or it may be, as the medieval legend, which is embodied in the Old Saxon poem of *The Heliand*, has it, that Daniel transmitted to the learned men of the East a tradition concerning this particular star. At any rate, they had come to worship Him whose coming the star indicated, to give Him divine homage and adoration by a gesture or ceremony of abject submission, placing themselves and all their possessions at His disposal.

The effect of this startling announcement: V. 3. **When Herod the king had heard these things, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him.** The consternation of Herod may be explained in two ways. As king, because of his position as king, Herod was troubled. Having himself reached his position of ruling sovereign by methods which were not at all unobjectionable, the foreigner and usurper feared a rival, and the tyrant feared the joyful acceptance of the rival by the people. At the same time, Herod felt a dread since it was freely predicted that a great personage, the Messiah, the King of the Jews, should judge both the nation and the world, — and Herod's conscience was not clean. On the other hand, the people were excited for different reasons. Their alarm was due to a bad conscience and the feeling of guilt because of their hypocrisy and selfishness which was sure to be found out by the Messiah, but mingled with this was the excitement of expecting a deliverer from the yoke of Rome, a hope which had been carefully cherished by the Pharisees.

Herod's measures to meet the emergency: V. 4. **And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he demanded of them where Christ should be born.** Not the entire Sanhedrin, or Great Council of the Jewish people, — for that included also the elders, many of whom Herod had put to death, — but the chief priests, the present incumbent of the office as well as former high priests; and the scribes, who were also political officers, assisting the civil magistrates in the rôle of confidential secretaries and statisticians. All of these were men of letters. Here again was a political move planned to strengthen Herod's tottering prestige: to be summoned to a secret meeting might be thought a rare distinction by the Jewish leaders. And Herod, accustomed as he was to commanding, in this instance was very careful about couching his request in polite, though urgent, terms. The question he submitted was a theological one: Where, according to the transmitted records, according to the accepted tradition, is the birthplace of the Christ?

The answer of the Jewish theologians savors of a hidden satisfaction: V. 5. **And they said unto him, In Bethlehem of Judea; for thus it is written by the prophet, v. 6a. And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, art not the least among the princes of Judah.** Their opinion was given without hesitation; it reflected the current opinion and agreed with Talmudic tradition. In their Scriptural proof they do not quote the Old Testament passage literally, but combine the words of the prophet, Micah 5, 2, with 2 Sam. 5, 2. Incidentally, their answer was shaped by some interpretation due to rabbinical teaching. "Art not thou the least?" the text inquires. Bethlehem may be little in size and influence, especially as compared with its metropolitan neighbor, but it is by no means the least in dignity and distinction. It may have been considered small and insignificant among the thousands of Judah, the cities that could boast a population of a thousand or more families, but it still had the best-founded claim for excellence among the princes of Judah. Here is indisputable evidence: V. 6 b. **For out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule My people Israel.** Out of the despised village One should come forth, should regard it as His native town, who would combine the qualities of a Ruler with those of a tender, loving Friend and watchful Guardian. He whose birth was to distinguish Bethlehem-Judah, would be a Prince and Leader, who would make the shepherd's sleepless devotion for those entrusted to him His life's object.

Herod was convinced that the information he

18) Luther, 11, 300.

received was reliable. He resolved, therefore, to remove a possible rival by a speedy and thorough, though cruel method. But he must have more information: V. 7. **Then Herod, when he had privily called the wise men, enquired of them diligently what time the star appeared.** It was a secret conference, just fitting in with his political trickery. Had he made his inquiries in a public reception, his own courtiers might have become suspicious, but the unsuspecting visitors could be coaxed to talk freely in a private interview and would not become alarmed. The exact time of the star's first appearance was what Herod wanted, assuming probably that the birth of the child had occurred at the same time. All of which was an especially loathsome form of hypocrisy, an affectation of a kind interest in all that related to the Child in whose destinies the very stars seemed involved.

Herod carried out his scheme: V. 8a. **And he sent them to Bethlehem and said, Go and search diligently for the young Child; and when ye have found Him, bring me word again.** Eager for the success of his plans, he nevertheless manages to make his guileless visitors feel that he has nothing but the favorable outcome of their quest at heart. The text implies the idea of great haste. He sent them off at once with the urgent entreaty, almost command: Go and search. Leave nothing undone, make your search most thorough, in order that the Child may be found. And not only that: V. 8b. **That I may come and worship Him also.** He crowns his hypocrisy with a final base lie. For it was not that he wanted to bow down to the Child in adoring worship, but he intended to bow down the Child's soul into the dust of death.

In simple trustfulness, the Magi proceed to act according to the king's words: V. 9. **When they had heard the king, they departed; and, lo, the star which they saw in the East went before them, till it came and stood over where the young Child was.** They left Jerusalem, apparently all alone and with only general directions to guide them. Herod wanted no talebearers from among those that patterned after him. But the Magi, looking up to heaven, once more see their guide in the sky; they recognize the heavenly sign which had first called their attention to the miracle. And this star kept going before them all the way until, as they came to Bethlehem, it took up its definite position right over the house where the Child was, for He was the object of their search, to Him they were directed. Another proof that the star here referred to was made for just this purpose: it traveled from north to south. It must have stood much lower than other stars, since it indicated exactly in which house the Child was. "But this star, since it goes with them from Jerusalem to Bethlehem, went from north to south; which therefore establishes clearly that it was of a different kind, course, and place than the stars in the sky. It was not an attached star, as the astronomers call the stars, but a free star that could rise and sink, turn to all places." 19)

The effect of its appearance upon the Magi: V. 10. **When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy.** They were overjoyed. Their long journey was successful, their arduous quest was ended. The most intense gladness, a fairly ecstatic delight, took possession of them, as the evangelist expresses it. At once they carried out the purpose of their journey: V. 11a. **And when they were come into the house, they saw the young Child with Mary, His mother, and fell down, and worshiped Him.** So vivid is Matthew's description that the words fairly gush forth in a joyful stream. The Magi saw with their own eyes Him whom they had longed to behold, the Child, the Messiah, the promised Star of Judah. His mother Mary and His foster-father, who is intentionally omitted, had now found shelter in one of the houses of the village. The Magi worshiped the Child after the Oriental fashion of falling down on the knees and touching the forehead to the earth, in complete surrender. V. 11b. **And when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto Him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh.** With full hands they come, as befits such as would enter into the presence of royalty. They open their treasure-chests; they bring forth gold, the most precious metal, frankincense and myrrh, costly aromatic gums distilled from trees, much used in religious ceremonies, Ps. 72, 10; Is. 60, 6. Whether there is any special significance, a mystical meaning, in the gifts, is an idle speculation which has engaged many commentators. It was commonly stated: Gold, as to the King; incense, as to God; myrrh, as to one destined to die; or, as a medieval rhyme has it: "The first was gold, as most mighty King; the second was myrrh, as Priest of priests being; the third was incense in tokening of burying." Luther's explanation is simple: "Although they [the Magi] enter a poor house, find a poor young woman, with a poor child, and also there is an appearance so unlike a king that their servant is more honorable and reputable, yet they are not troubled, but in great, strong, full faith they put everything out of their eyes and mind which nature with its arrogance might adduce and bring into play; they simply follow the verse of the prophet and the testimony of the star and believe Him to be King, fall down, worship Him, and give presents to Him." 20)

Matthew concludes the narrative of the adoration: V. 12. **And being warned of God in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed into their own country another way.** Here is another instance of divine intervention to frustrate the bloodthirsty designs of Herod toward the

19) Luther, 11, 331. 2105.
20) Luther, 11, 355. 2113

Savior. It does not appear from the text that the simple trustfulness of the wise men had given way to suspicion as to the king's intention, and that they had asked God for a sign. It is simply narrated that by command of God they received an earnest admonition, an emphatic warning, not to turn back on their steps over Jerusalem. Whether each individual member of the party had the vision, or whether their leader alone received God's command, is immaterial. Enough that they complied with the request. They departed, they withdrew, and thus escaped into their own country by taking a different caravan route, away from the dangerous neighborhood of Herod. Their object had been gained, they had seen the light of the Gentiles; their hearts were filled with the content of the believing soul that has seen the salvation of the Lord.

The Flight into Egypt and the Return to Nazareth. Matt. 2, 13—23.

One part of Herod's plan had not worked out: the Magi did not return to reveal the exact whereabouts of the Child. Now the Lord also foiled the design against the Child's life. V. 13. **And when they were departed, behold, the angel of the Lord appeareth to Joseph in a dream, saying, Arise, and take the young Child and His mother and flee into Egypt, and be thou there until I bring thee word; for Herod will seek the young Child to destroy Him.** God again makes use of an angelic vision to protect His Son, by giving the necessary instructions to Joseph. Cp. chapter 1, 20. The need of haste is expressed: Having arisen, take at once; lose no time. The Child is again named first, everything revolves about His well-being. "And His mother," the angel says. The phraseology is very careful and once more definitely points to the virgin birth. The reason for the command is also stated, in order to prevent delay. Herod has the intention, he has planned, he is about to search for the Child with the purpose of putting Him to death. Even the place of refuge is named in the divine message. Egypt should be their temporary home until such a time as a further command or communication to Joseph would permit their return to their native land. It is probable that Egypt was chosen because many Jews had settled in that country. The holy family would therefore be among fellow-countrymen and in a Roman province, where the rage of Herod could not pursue them.

Joseph again was obedient to the angel's word: V. 14. **When he arose, he took the young Child and His mother by night, and departed into Egypt:** v. 15. **and was there until the death of Herod; that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Out of Egypt have I called My Son.** Matthew relates the carrying out of the command in the very words in which the angel had spoken them in order to show the obedient spirit of Joseph. That very night he quietly made his escape with those entrusted to his care. He made Egypt his home until after the death of Herod, which, by the nearest historical calculation, occurred in the same year. He died of a peculiar, loathsome disease, which caused his flesh to decay upon his bones, rendering him an abhorrent carcass before his soul finally left the body. It may be remarked, in passing, that all accounts of Christ's stay in Egypt, as found in apocryphal sources, are entirely fanciful and gross pieces of superstition. But it is of interest to find even here a fulfilment of Old Testament prophecy, Hos. 11, 1. Though the deliverance of Israel out of the serfdom of Egypt is there referred to, the Holy Ghost here gives us another true explanation, showing that the prophecy relates to the infant Jesus, in His sheltered sojourn in, and safe return from, the country where His ancestors had been held in bondage. Note the reference to the divine inspiration of the prophecy!

V. 16. **Then Herod, when he saw that he was mocked of the wise men, was exceeding wroth, and sent forth, and slew all the children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the coasts thereof, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had diligently enquired of the wise men.** The evangelist, after his brief digression, returns to his story proper. Herod saw that, from his standpoint, he had been outwitted, made a fool of, by the Magi. And when he was certain that they were not going to retrace their steps to Jerusalem, to report what they had found at Bethlehem, he was enraged, extremely incensed with an unreasonable rage. This wrath demanded an outlet, it could be quenched only in blood. Herod sent executioners to Bethlehem with the command to kill all children that were to be found in the village proper and in its entire vicinity, the rural district surrounding the town. Not one was spared, not even, according to an ancient report, his own son. In fixing the age of his victims, he made use of the information given him by the Magi, probably extending the time either way in order to make sure that none escaped. Herod would not be too scrupulous: from one hour to two years old, it mattered not; if anything, it insured him an ample margin either way.

Here again there is the fulfilment, not of a literal, but of a typical prophecy: V. 17. **Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet, saying,** v. 18. **In Rama was there a voice heard, lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, and would not be comforted, because they are not.** The passage as penned by the prophet, Jer. 31, 15, is the narration of a vision with reference to the deportation of Israel into captivity, Rachel being the representative mother of the nation, and Ramah having been a fortress of Israel on the frontier where the captives were

collected. This prophetic passage Matthew applies to the slaughter of the innocents. Rachel is represented as the mother of Bethlehem and its environs, because it was here that she died, in childbirth, Gen. 35, 16—20. Her sympathy for her children's misfortunes would cause her to indulge in such bitter weeping and mourning as the mothers of Bethlehem doubtless gave themselves to at this exhibition of revolting and senseless cruelty on the part of Herod. Consolation and comfort could avail but little when they were obliged to witness the murder of their children before their very eyes and could only wring their hands in helpless sorrow and agony.

The evangelist now returns to the story of the Savior: V. 19. **But when Herod was dead, behold, an angel of the Lord appeareth in a dream to Joseph in Egypt,** v. 20. **saying, Arise, and take the young Child and His mother, and go into the land of Israel; for they are dead which sought the young Child's life.** Herod died at Jericho in the year 750 after the founding of Rome. And his son Antipater, heir apparent to the throne, who had inherited his father's cruel disposition, had been put to death at the tyrant's command, five days before he himself yielded up his soul. So they whose murderous designs were most apparent were no longer living. The angel therefore gave Joseph the command to return to the land of Israel. No immediate danger threatened the Savior's life. No apprehension need be felt regarding His safety. There is nothing, no person to fear: Go! Note again that Matthew always gives to the Christ-child the prominent position to which His divinity entitles Him. He is to be kept foremost in the minds and hearts of all readers.

Joseph lost no time in obeying the command: V. 21. **And he arose, and took the young Child and His mother, and came into the land of Israel.** But when he reached Judea, a new danger confronted him, causing his fears to be renewed: V. 22a. **But when he heard that Archelaus did reign in Judea in the room of his father Herod, he was afraid to go thither.** Herod, indeed, was dead, but Augustus had divided his kingdom among his three sons. Archelaus obtained Judea, Idumea, and Samaria, with the designation of ethnarch; Herod Antipas, Galilee and Perea; and Philip, Batanea, Trachonitis, and Auranitis, the latter two receiving the title tetrarch (ruler over a fourth part). Like his father, Archelaus was a suspicious and cruel tyrant. It is related of him that, at one of the passovers, he caused three thousand people to be put to death in the Temple and city. No wonder that Joseph was filled with apprehension as to the safety of his charges. To settle in Judea was the most natural course to follow, and he probably had Jerusalem in mind. But once more God Himself, through the agency of an angel, solved the difficulty and indicated to him a place of security. And so he turned aside, made the journey up to Galilee, the northern part of Palestine, formerly divided into Upper and Lower Galilee, the former being Galilee proper, Matt. 4, 12; John 4, 43, the latter occupying the ancient territory of Zebulon. It was to Lower Galilee that Joseph journeyed with the Child and His mother: V. 22b. **Notwithstanding, being warned of God in a dream, he turned aside into the parts of Galilee:** v. 23. **and he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth; that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, He shall be called a Nazarene.** So Joseph returned to his former city, which had also been Mary's home, Luke 1, 26; 2, 4. Nazareth was a small city southwest of the Sea of Galilee, not far from Cana, on the one side, and from Mount Tabor, on the west. It was situated on the slope of a hill, and was surrounded by beautiful and grand scenery. It was here that Jesus lived until He entered upon His ministry, Luke 2, 51; 4, 16; Matt. 3, 13.

This reference of the evangelist to a fulfilment of Old Testament prophecy has ever caused difficulties, since there is no individual passage, with the exact contents as given, in the writings referred to. It is significant, however, that Matthew writes: "Which was spoken by the prophets," thus indicating a general type rather than an explicit text. The most plausible explanation: "Nazarene" or "man of Nazareth" contains the reference. For the name Nazareth is derived from a Hebrew root meaning a branch or tender offshoot. Thus the Messiah is called in Is. 11, 1. And this passage is analogous to the expressions used in Is. 53, 2; 4, 2; Jer. 23, 5; 33, 15; Zech. 3, 8; 6, 12, and to other descriptions of the humble appearance of the Messiah. Cp. John 1, 46. Others have suggested that the reference is to Judg. 13, 7. "It is with the prophetic references in the gospels as with songs without words. The composer has a certain scene or state of mind in his view, and writes under its inspiration. But you are not in his secret, and cannot tell when you hear the music what it means. But let the key be given, and immediately you find new meaning in the music. The prophecies are the music; the key is the history." 21)

Summary. *The Magi having been directed to Bethlehem by a special star and by prophetic direction, give to the Christ-child divine adoration, while the life of the Savior is preserved from the cruelty of Herod by divine interposition, which directs Joseph first to Egypt, then to Galilee.*

21) *Expositor's Greek Testament*, 1, 78.

CHAPTER 3.

The Ministry of John the Baptist.

Matt. 3, 1—12.

V. 1a. **In those days came John the Baptist.** The method here used by Matthew to introduce a new section in his history of the Savior is one employed by the holy writers to refer to a preceding date or occurrence, Ex. 2, 11. 23; Is. 38, 1. It was during the residence of Jesus in Nazareth, during the period of His obscurity, when He was quietly growing in wisdom and age, and in favor with God and man, Luke 2, 52. Luke's narrative is here characterized by a most careful fixing of time, Luke 3, 1. 2, as befits so exact an historian, but our present passage is dramatically most effective. Those were memorable days and years to which our wistful, reverent gaze turns back, which the eyes of our spirit do not tire to behold. John, surnamed the Baptist, came in those days; he entered upon his ministry, for which he had been intended and prepared even before his birth, Luke 1, 15—17. 42—44. 76. 77. He is distinguished from John the Apostle and bears the name Baptist from the outstanding feature of his public work, since he baptized those that confessed their sins. It was necessary, to this end, that the hearts of the people be properly prepared, and therefore John came, v. 1 b. **preaching in the wilderness of Judea.** Not primarily as a teacher, but as a preacher and exhorter he came, solemnly proclaiming, heralding the approach of the kingdom of heaven. And this with all the greater impressiveness, since his abode was in the wilderness of Judea, away from the usual haunts of men, in the mountainous, rugged country toward the Dead Sea, and in the steppes, or pasture lands, sloping down from there to the valley of the Jordan. Interesting, because different!

The emphasis of John was on one fact: V. 2. **And saying, Repent ye; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.** That was the chief content, the matter, the burden, of his heralding, the admonition to repentance, the watchword which characterized his preaching. He deemed a complete change of mind and heart necessary as preparation for the advent of the Messiah. For His kingdom, the kingdom of God, the kingdom of heaven, has come near; it is about to be revealed in all its glory. It is a kingdom of the heavens in opposition to an earthly kingdom of which the Jews dreamed, since Jesus, the Lord of heaven, is its Ruler, and since this kingdom, whose beauty is here often hidden by the misery of this present life, will be fully revealed in the light of the future glory above. There all those that with sorrowful and contrite hearts accepted the Savior in His lowliness and humility will be partakers of His kingdom with its eternal splendor and majesty. Sincere repentance, followed by simple faith, opens the way to all this grandeur. "But this is repentance, if I believe God's Word, which reveals to me and accuses me of being a sinner and condemned before God, and am terrified with all my heart because I have ever been disobedient to my God, have not rightly looked upon and considered His commandments, much less kept the greatest or the least, and yet do not despair, but let myself be directed to Jesus, to seek mercy and help with Him, and also firmly believe I shall find it. For He is the Lamb of God, destined from eternity for this purpose that He shall bear the sins of the whole world and pay for them by His death." 22)

Matthew's manner of adducing the prophetic passage in this instance is peculiar: V. 3. **For this is he that was spoken of by the prophet Esaias, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make His paths straight.** He sets him apart from others concerning whom there was a prophecy. This is the man whom Isaiah had in mind when he wrote his words of comfort for Jerusalem, Is. 40, 3. We have here an allusion to the well-known Oriental custom of heralding the coming of, and preparing the way for, princes in their travels. The typical prophecy of Isaiah became a distinct announcement in Malachi, chapter 3, 1. Cp. Mal. 4, 6; Luke 1, 17; Matt. 11, 10. 14; 17, 11. John was the herald of Jesus. The purpose of his ministry was by preaching and by baptizing to prepare the hearts and minds of the people for the coming of the great King of Mercy. The King's highway must be straight, without deviations of hypocrisy, without twists and turns of selfishness. That is the burden of the cry in the wilderness.

The appearance and habits of the Baptist should also be noted: V. 4. **And the same John had his raiment of camel's hair and a leathern girdle about his loins; and his meat was locusts and wild honey.** John was an antitype of Elijah, the great prophet and preacher of Israel, both as to his personal appearance and bearing and as to the peculiar difficulties under which his message went forth, 2 Kings 1, 8; 1 Kings 19, 10. His raiment, his usual clothing, was not a complete dress or cloak, but a covering or garment thrown over the shoulder, woven out of camel's hair, a rough, uncomfortable protection against the elements. It was held together at the loins by a leathern girdle, without ornamentation. His main article of food was locusts, an edible species as named in Lev. 11, 22, still used as meat in the East: legs and wings stripped off, and the remainder boiled and roasted. To give at least some variety to the diet, or to serve for sustaining life when locusts were scarce, John used wild honey, such as was deposited by bees in trees and holes in the rocks, or the tree honey which exudes from fig-trees, palms, and other trees. The austere, ascetic appearance and mode of life of John corresponded with his mes-

22) Luther, 7, 689.

sage, which enjoined renunciation of the world and repentance.

The effect of his preaching: V. 5. **Then went out to him Jerusalem and all Judea, and all the region round about Jordan.** If not instantaneous, the success was rapid. The news traveled swiftly. First came those from the surrounding country, people from either side of the Jordan, whose homes were in or near the wilderness. Then the great movement spread in ever-widening circles into Judea. And finally, haughty, disdainful Jerusalem is drawn into the excitement. This the evangelist intimates by placing the capital city first; even conservative Jerusalem goes into the wilderness, a penitent at the call of John. A remarkable testimony for the power of the Word when openly and fearlessly proclaimed!

John performed his ministry to all: V. 6. **And were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins.** His powerful, appealing call to repentance had its effect. In ever-increasing numbers they came. The guilt-burdened men and women, whose lives had been lived in sham and deceit, made a frank, explicit, public confession of their sins, voluntarily, now general, now special, as they came under the influence of John's personality and message. "This confession of sins by individuals was a new thing in Israel. There was a collective confession on the great Day of Atonement, and individual confession in certain specified cases (Num. 5, 7), but no great spontaneous self-unburdenment of penitent souls — every man apart. It must have been a stirring sight." 23) And as they came and made confession of their sins, in a practically unbroken stream, they were baptized by John in the river Jordan. It was an awakening such as the land had not witnessed since the time of the ancient prophets.

A perplexing, disagreeable situation: V. 7. **But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?** Matthew includes the members of both sects in one and the same category of unworthy intruders. The Pharisees excelled especially in their insistence upon outward observance of the Law and the traditions of the elders, and the Sadducees were rationalists that rejected all the inspired writings but the books of Moses. In either case their religion was nothing but a thin veneer of form and show of pomp, without the assent of the heart. All the more reprehensible, then, is their affront in appearing at John's baptism, where repentance, change of heart, was the primary demand. It may have been partly curiosity, partly fascination, since they could not remain indifferent to a movement which had assumed such proportions, that brought them to John. At any rate, they came upon the scene, they appeared at the place where John was baptizing. But their reception at his hands was anything but pleasant. "Generation of vipers" is the epithet he applies to them, offspring of serpents, imbued with the nature of the slimy, stinging reptiles. It is an outburst of intense moral aversion that causes him to shrink from, and openly denounce, these visitors as both deceitful and malicious, Ps. 140, 3; Is. 14, 29; 59, 5; Ps. 58, 4. It seemed indeed as though they were fleeing from the wrath to come by making application for entrance into the Kingdom, but there is every reason for distrusting their sincerity. It is impossible to escape from the wrath which will bring upon hypocrites the holy, penal justice of God, and thus the punishment itself, Rom. 1, 18; Eph. 2, 3.

Having thus unmasked them, the Baptist makes his demand: V. 8. **Bring forth, therefore, fruits meet for repentance.** An entire change of heart must precede the performing of truly good works, such as measure up to the standard of an honest repentance, as conform to a real amendment of life. John insists upon their producing proper, suitable, sufficient evidence of a true repentance, fruits of a divine flavor, before he can consent to administer Baptism to them. And his further warning is peculiarly fitting in the case of the Pharisees: V. 9. **And think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father; for I say unto you that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham.** The fact that they were members, according to the flesh, of God's chosen people, the fact that they were descendants of Abraham, in a direct line, had ever been the boast of the Pharisees, John 8, 33. 39. But a mere external membership in God's Church is of no avail. He is a Judge of the hearts and minds and may, on that score, at any time reject them as spurious children. Besides, it would be a small thing for God, out of the very stones of the wilderness, to create for Himself new children, more genuine as to faith than the Pharisees and Sadducees. "We are (said they) God's people whom He has chosen before all nations on earth, and to whom He has given circumcision; so we have and observe the Law, visit God's Temple at Jerusalem, and exercise ourselves in the holy service which God Himself has ordered. In short, we go our way in the spiritual and worldly government, as both have been fixed and ordered through Moses by God's command; are also of the blood and tribe of the holy patriarchs: Abraham is our father, etc. What do we lack that we should not be pious and holy, dear and pleasing to God, and be saved? All this, he says, does not concern the matter. For God is not interested in knowing that you are proficient in boasting much and high concerning the Law, the Temple, the fathers, etc. He wants you to fear Him and to believe His promise, to obey and accept Him whom He has promised to you and now sends. The alternative is that He will reject and exterminate you with all your glory, with which He Himself

23) *Expositor's Greek Testament*, 1, 81.

has endowed and ornamented you before all nations." 24)

And this is not all: V. 10. **And now also the ax is laid to the root of the trees. Therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.** The ax has been placed, it is even now ready to begin its work of just retribution, of stern justice upon every spurious descendant of Abraham. Every tree which proves itself hopelessly barren cannot escape the near inevitable doom. And John makes use of careful phrasing. Not only is fruit demanded, which may, under circumstances, be unpalatable and even poisonous, but his condition is that the tree produce good fruit. Unless this demand is met, there is no other alternative: The useless tree is condemned to be firewood; the unbelieving Jew will be excluded from the kingdom of the Messiah.

John's sermon would have been incomplete without a reference to Him whose way he was sent to prepare: V. 11. **I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance, but He that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire.** His was merely a temporary and a symbolical mission. He was only the forerunner, the herald, and he was fully satisfied with this secondary and subordinate position. His baptism was merely preparatory. By inducing men to repent and by administering the washing of Baptism, he was getting them ready for the understanding of the higher mission of the Messiah. But He who is just coming, who follows immediately after me in point of time, who will shortly make His appearance, is stronger than I; to Him pertains almighty power. And with this power is combined divine dignity. So great, so august, so exalted is His personage that John does not feel himself worthy even to take off His sandals, the work of the lowest slaves in the Orient. The ministry of this man will stand out in wonderful contrast. Himself will baptize you, will give you a peculiar baptism, with the Holy Ghost and with fire. A twofold effect of Christ's work is here predicted: To those who with penitent hearts accept Him as Savior, He will give the precious boon of the Holy Spirit, with all His glorious gifts and powers, John 1, 33; Mark 1, 8; Acts 1, 5; but those whose impenitent hearts would reject the purchased salvation He will immerse in fire. They have refused to accept the Spirit with His invigorating and illuminating power, and therefore the omnipotence of His outraged holiness will submerge and devour them.25)

This thought is carried out still further: V. 12. **Whose fan is in His hand, and He will throughly purge His floor, and gather His wheat into the garner; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.** The picture is that of a threshing-floor in the Orient, a flat, open space paved with stones. The husbandman has driven his oxen across the floor to tread out the grain from the hulls, or his workmen have beaten it out with flails. Now comes the purging of the floor to separate the stalks and the hulls from the grain, and the winnowing of the loose matter with a fan to blow away the lighter chaff and leave the heavier kernels. God's great threshing-floor is the earth. The test by which He decides the fate of every person in the world, by which He separates the wheat from the chaff, is the relation toward Jesus and His salvation. Those that are found secure in His redemption through faith are gathered safely into the garner of heaven. But those that are found too light, either on account of their reliance upon their own self-righteousness or because they esteem a mere external church-membership a sufficient guarantee of the joys of heaven, will find themselves subjected to the violent, inextinguishable fire, not only of the judgment, Mal. 4, 1, but of hell, Matt. 25, 41.

The Baptism of Jesus. Matt. 3, 13—17.

The time had now come for Jesus to enter upon His ministry, to be inducted into His office by a public ceremony: V. 13. **Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him.** He now came forth from His concealment, while John was at the very height of his evangelistic career. He came down to John, not like the Pharisees and Sadducees, who really all the while rejected God's counsel against themselves, Luke 7, 30, but in an open, friendly manner, to enter into amicable relations with him, and incidentally to receive Baptism at his hands. So far as His coming in itself was concerned, there was no difference between His desire for Baptism and that of the multitudes.

And yet Matthew writes: V. 14. **But John forbade Him, saying, I have need to be baptized of Thee, and comest Thou to me?** This passage is not out of harmony with John 1, 31. 33, where John says that he did not know Jesus. The apparent contradiction is in the translation only. In the original the word used signifies "to recognize beyond the possibility of a doubt, to be sure of the identity." John had known of the existence of the Messiah, either from his mother or by direct revelation, but he did not know Him personally. When Jesus came, the majesty and dignity of His bearing caused John to surmise His identity, hence his hesitancy. But the actual identifying sign, which removed all doubts and made the recognition absolute, did not happen until after the baptism, as John relates in his gospel. In the mean time, John, impressed by the moral exaltation which emanated from the person of his visitor, sought, with some persistence, to

---

24) Luther, 7, 682.

25) The expression "with the Holy Ghost and with fire" may also be taken as a hendiadyoin and understood of the purging power of the Holy Ghost, by means of which He searches and purifies the hearts, Mal. 4, 1.

dissuade and thus hinder Him from carrying out His intention. He cannot throw off the impression that this man is greater than he, and it behooves the smaller to receive Baptism at the hands of the greater. Well might John wonder as to the reason that actuates Christ in coming and seeking Baptism. "Why does He come and seek Baptism, as there is no sin and uncleanness in Him which Baptism would remove? That will be a blessed baptism. John here is getting a sinner who in His own person has no sin, and yet is the greatest sinner, that has and bears the sin of the whole world. For this reason He permits Himself to be baptized and confesses with this action that He is a sinner. However, not for Himself, but for us. For He here takes my place and thy place and stands in our stead who are sinners, and since all, especially the arrogant saints, do not want to be sinners, He must become a sinner for all; He assumes the form of our sinful flesh and complains, as many psalms testify, on the cross and in His passion, of the weight of the sins which He bears." 26)

So Jesus overrules John's objection: V. 15. **And Jesus, answering, said unto him, Suffer it to be so now; for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness. Then he suffered Him.** Obedience and fulfilment were the outstanding traits of the Messiah's vicarious work. In applying these, He could brook no opposition. Every righteous ordinance, all religious usages that were enjoined upon the people, He wanted to fulfil. This Jesus gently, but firmly urged. It was the proper, the right, and the expedient thing to do. And so John acquiesced.

From ancient times the teachers of the Church have found here a wider, larger reference. "Jesus says: . . . If that shall be performed that the poor sinners may come to righteousness and be saved, you must baptize Me. Because for the sake of sinners I have become a sinner, must therefore do what God has charged the sinners to do, in order that they may become just through Me." 27)

The occasion must needs be marked by preternatural accompaniments: V. 16. **And Jesus, when He was baptized, went up straightway out of the water; and, lo, the heavens were opened unto Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting upon Him:** v. 17. **and, lo, a voice from heaven, saying, This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.** Here was a revelation of the divine essence. As soon as Jesus had been baptized, He at once walked up the bank away from the river. His baptism had been necessary, but the miracle which was now to take place was even more important as manifesting the relationship obtaining between Him and the other persons of the Godhead. In a wonderful manner, causing a surprised exclamation in the evangelist's narrative, the heavens were opened, a most glorious apparition, since it was an actual happening and not a vision, as in the case of Jacob, Stephen, and others, Gen. 28, 12; Acts 7, 55. 56; 10, 11. And he, John, saw the Spirit of God descending in a bodily shape like a dove upon Jesus, John 1, 32—34; Luke 3, 22. It is an idle speculation to inquire why the dove was chosen, and to find the comparison in the perfect gentleness, purity, and fulness of life of this bird. Let us rather emphasize the fact that God wanted to convey the idea of an unlimited imparting of the Holy Spirit to His Son, according to His human nature, Ps. 45, 8; Heb. 1, 9; Acts 10, 38. And the marvels were not yet ended. Once more Matthew calls out: Behold! God the Father is now also manifested by a voice from heaven, identifying both Him and the Son. Cp. Is. 42, 1; Ps. 2, 7. This man that was thus plainly distinguished and set apart from all the rest of the people there present is the true Son of God, beloved of Him in a unique sense. It is an eternal act of loving contemplation with which the Father regards the Son. It is with the consciousness of the Father's good pleasure, His full and unequivocal consent and blessing, that Christ enters upon His ministry. The Triune God, at the baptism of Jesus, set the seal of His approval upon the work of redemption.

Summary. *In the course of John the Baptist's ministry, during which he had occasion to administer a sharp rebuke to the Pharisees and Sadducees, Jesus also received Baptism at his hands, whereupon there occurred a marvelous revelation of the Triune God.*

26) Luther, 7, 691; 11, 2130.
27) Luther, 13, 1575; 11, 2139.

THE BAPTISM OF JOHN.

When John the Baptist came into the wilderness of Judea with his message and baptism of repentance, he was not foisting upon the people a new and strange ceremony of which they had never heard. On the contrary, divers washings, many different kinds of Levitical baptisms, had been known to the Jews since the time of Moses. The rite originated in the ceremonial lustration of the unclean, Gen. 35, 2; Ex. 19, 10; Num. 19, 7; Judith 12, 7, and was soon extended to embrace every form of Levitical purifying that was done with water, Heb. 9, 10.

One of the earliest forms of religious ablutions was the baptism of the priests at their consecration, Ex. 29, 1—9; 40, 12. There is an allusion to this washing of the priests in Heb. 10, 22. Any defilement of the body contracted by the priests after their installation, in the daily performance of their duties, especially by contact of their hands and feet with unclean things, had to be removed by washing these members when they entered the sanctuary, Ex. 30, 17—21; 40, 30—32. Two passages of the psalms refer to this custom, Ps. 26, 6; 73, 13. If an Israelite had touched the carcass of an animal or carried any part thereof, he was considered unclean and had to wash his clothes and his body, Lev. 11, 24—28. 39. 40; 5, 2; 22, 4—6.

There was a baptism of those who had recovered from leprosy, Lev. 13, 6. 34. On the great day of atonement the high priest performed very careful ablutions, both at the beginning and at the conclusion of his ministrations, Lev. 16, 4. 24. The man who had led the scapegoat into the wilderness and likewise he who had carried forth without the camp the bullock and the goat for a sin-offering, were required to bathe their flesh in water, Lev. 16, 26—28. When Levites were consecrated, they were sprinkled with water, Num. 8, 5—7. 21. The priest and the two laymen that had prepared the ashes of the red heifer had to bathe their flesh in water, Num. 19, 7—10. There were also other ceremonial washings or baptisms, with which the Jews were familiar, Lev. 15, 1—29; Num. 19, 11—22; Deut. 21, 1—9; 23, 10. 11.

But the most interesting of the Jewish religious washings was the baptism of proselytes, who, after being instructed in certain parts of the Law, and having made fresh profession of their faith, were then immersed in water, after which they were considered full-fledged Israelites in all things. It is this ceremony to which the baptism of John, in its outward form, was related.[28])

Another interesting question is that concerning the difference, if any, between the baptism of John and that instituted by Christ. It must be noted, on the one hand, that there are many points of agreement. John baptized by divine command, Luke 3, 2. 3; John 1, 33; Matt. 21, 25; Luke 7, 30. His was a baptism in and with water, Matt. 3, 11; Mark 1, 8; Luke 3, 16; John 1, 26; 3, 23. It was, finally, a baptism unto repentance, for the forgiveness of sins, Mark 1, 4; Luke 3, 3. In all these features it agreed with the Baptism of Christ.

Nevertheless, there was a difference between the baptism of John and that of Christ. When Paul came to Ephesus and found certain disciples that had merely been baptized unto John's baptism, he baptized them in the name of the Lord Jesus, Acts 19, 1—16. The chief points of difference between the two baptisms are indicated in this passage. John's baptism is consistently called a "baptism of repentance." It was administered to adults only, to such as confessed their sins, as had reached the age of discretion, Matt. 3, 6; Mark 1, 5, whereas the Baptism of Christ is for all people, including the children, Acts 2, 39. 41; Col. 2, 11. The Baptism of Jesus works and transmits the forgiveness of sins as a gift which has been earned; the baptism of John points forward to the winning of this precious boon through the redemption to be made through Jesus Christ. In short, the baptism of John was typical, preparatory, as was his preaching; the glorious fulfilment has come in and with Christ.[29])

28) *Theol. Quart.*, 13, 219—232; Edersheim, *Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, 1, 273; 2, 745.

29) *Syn.-Ber.*, Mo. Syn., Minn. Dist., 1912, 36—41; Luther, 7, 1733; Pieper, *Christliche Dogmatik*, III, 337—339.

CHAPTER 4.

The Temptation in the Wilderness.

Matt. 4, 1—11.

Jesus, by His baptism and the accompanying supernatural manifestations, had been formally and publicly inaugurated into His ministry. But He was not to begin His preaching at once: V. 1. **Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil.** "Then," immediately after His baptism, as soon as He had received the extraordinary communication of the Spirit. This same Spirit now filled His humanity and directed His actions, leading Him up, first of all, into the wilderness, causing Him to make the journey into the solitude of the desert the haunt of wild beasts rather than the abode of men. Mark 1, 13. It was a voluntary trip on the part of Jesus, His single concern being to fulfil, in all things, the will of His heavenly Father, Ps. 40, 7. 8; Heb. 10, 7. 9, though the weakness of His human nature may have required some urging, Mark 1, 12. For the object of this retirement was not merely to afford an opportunity for blessed rest and joy, nor to offer a chance for weighty contemplation as to the methods of revealing Himself to His people after the manner of a Buddha or a Mohammed, but to be tempted of the devil. The entire period of solitary living was occupied with this temptation, Mark 1, 13; Luke 4, 2. This combating of the devil was a part of the office and work for which He was sent by God and anointed with the Spirit. As the arch-enemy of mankind had tempted and overcome the first Adam, thus plunging the entire human race into condemnation, so he now proposed to vanquish the second Adam by hindering or frustrating the work of redemption. "Led up of the Spirit": "tempted of the devil" — a powerful contrast!

A severe test, even from the standpoint of Christ's physical nature: V. 2. **And when He had fasted forty days and forty nights, He was afterward an hungred.** The expression indicates that it was a spontaneous, voluntary desisting from food, the severity of the trials, the mental preoccupation caused by the temptations, stifling the ordinary desire for nourishment, somewhat after the manner of Moses, Ex. 34, 28, and Elijah, 1 Kings 19, 8. But this entire abstinence from food, which possibly included also drink, was not in the nature of an ascetic exercise. "That is also the reason why the evangelist at the beginning with great care sets down and says: He was driven into the wilderness by the Spirit that He fast and be tempted there, in order that no one may follow the example from his own choice and make a selfish, self-willed, and assumed fasting out

of it, but wait for the Spirit; He will send him enough of fasting and temptation." 30)

Of the many and various assaults which the devil employed during the forty days, Matthew and also Luke mention three incidents which took place at the end of this period. Note that the chronological sequence of the events here narrated is a minor consideration. The evangelist's chief aim is to picture the cunning manner of the temptation: V. 3. **And when the tempter came to Him, he said, If Thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread.** The word tempter applied to the devil fittingly describes his evil work, his constant occupation, his ceaseless attacks, Luke 22, 31; 1 Thess. 3, 5. The time and the form of this temptation were chosen with crafty calculation. Hunger naturally diminishes the resistance of the body, both physically and mentally; it enfeebles and irritates the mind and interferes with sound judgment. The wily suggestion might therefore easily find a favorable reception. Even the phrasing of the devil's insinuation should be noted: in harmony with his character, couched in the form of a question, implying a doubt, both as to the divine sonship of the Savior and as to His ability to provide food for Himself by miraculous means. As though he were saying: "I cannot believe that Thou art the Son of God; give me some proof. Speak, in order that these stones lying about on the desert floor may be turned, by a miracle, into loaves." To yield to the request would have meant: giving up to the spirit of evil and darkness, lack of trust in the divine Providence and support, letting selfishness rule rather than practising self-sacrifice.

The Savior equal to the occasion: V. 4. **But He answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.** The most powerful and effective weapon: a simple statement of Scripture truth, Deut. 8, 3. Jesus readily concedes the usual order of things, the dependence of man upon food for the ordinary means to live. But He declares that God is not bound by these means, but may support life by a word of His mouth. He thus frankly puts His trust in His Father, depending for the keeping of His earthly life, not on any foolish intermeddling with God's ways, nor on satanic device and agency, but on the power of His Word alone. And this is true in general. "All creatures are God's masks and mummeries, whom He will permit to work with Him and help carry out various things, which He otherwise, without their assistance, can do and actually does, in order that we may depend upon His Word alone, thus: If bread be there, that we do not have the more trust; or if none be there, that we on that account do not despair the more; but use it when it is there, and do without when it is not there, in full assurance that we yet live and are nourished at either time through the Word of God, whether there be bread or no bread. With such faith avarice, gluttony, and temporal worry concerning food is vanquished." 31) "He who would guard himself against such temptation may learn here from Christ that a person has two kinds of bread. The first and best bread, which comes down from heaven, is the Word of God; the other and more unimportant is the earthly bread which grows out of the ground. If, now, I have the first and best, the bread from heaven, and do not permit myself to be diverted therefrom, then the earthly bread will also not fail or remain away, the stones must rather turn to bread." 32)

Repulsed, but not routed, the devil seeks a new line of attack: V. 5. **Then the devil taketh Him up into the Holy City, and setteth Him on a pinnacle of the Temple,** v. 6a. **and saith unto Him, If Thou be the Son of God, cast Thyself down.** His attempt to produce distrust in God's ability to sustain life under unusual conditions having failed, Satan tries to plant the seed of self-glorification and presumption in the heart of Jesus. He shows greater boldness, taking the Lord to himself as his companion, practically seizing hold of Him, and carrying Him along to Jerusalem, called by the evangelist, as with affection, the Holy City. Here he set Him on the pinnacle of the Temple. This refers either to the southwest corner of the Temple court, where Herod had erected a gallery of great height, from whose dizzy top the depth of the Kidron Valley below was intensified to the eye, in which case the dangerousness of a leap would have given added force to the devil's urging; or Matthew has in mind the high roof of the Most Holy Place, the highest elevation of the Temple proper. A daring jump, an ostentatious miracle it would have been if Jesus, in the presence of the assembled multitude, had cast Himself down from this prominent point and reached the ground unharmed. By yielding to the devil at this suggestion, He might in an hour have gained more followers than the entire number of disciples amounted to whom He gathered by the laborious method of teaching.

Having been rendered cautious by his first experience, the enemy determined to ward off a second quotation from Scriptures by quoting a passage in his own favor: V. 6b. **For it is written, He shall give His angels charge concerning Thee; and in their hands they shall bear Thee up, lest at any time Thou dash Thy foot against a stone.** The devil truly can quote Scriptures to his purpose, in the manner peculiar to him, with the omission of an essential part. For in the text referred to, Ps. 91, 11. 12, the words, "To keep Thee in all Thy ways," are indispensable for a correct interpretation. It is not in the ways of a man's own choosing that the protecting hand of God

30) Luther, 11, 534.

31) Luther, 11, 539.

32) Luther, 13, 1687.

is assured him, but in the ways which agree with the rational order and the laws of the universe.

This is implied in the answer of the Lord. Note that He does not even take the trouble of rebuking Satan for misquoting Scriptures: V. 7. **Jesus said unto him, It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord, thy God.** He offers, not a contradiction, but a qualification, to emphasize the necessity of explaining Scripture through Scripture. A significant fact: Jesus quotes the passage to which He refers, Deut. 6, 16, in the singular, thus making application of its truth to Himself in this instance. The leap from the pinnacle just then would not only have meant seeking escape from the cross at the cost of duty, but it would have been a bold challenge of Providence upon false understanding of the Bible, and so sinful in itself. The Lord's method of handling the situation must be that of every Christian. "Now, this is such a temptation as no one understands unless he has tried it. For just as the first drives to despair, so this one drives to presumption and to such works as surely do not have God's word and command. There a Christian should choose the golden mean that he neither despair nor be bold, but remain simply with the Word in true trust and faith. Then shall the good angels be with him; otherwise not." 33)

And still the devil is not overcome: V. 8. **Again, the devil taketh Him up into an exceeding high mountain, and showeth Him all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them.** Once more the tempter attacks; there is no ceasing in his efforts to destroy God's work, 1 Pet. 5, 8. And he has great power, he controls, to some extent, the forces and the wealth of the earth, as a prince of the power of the air, Eph. 2, 2. Cp. John 12, 31; 14, 30; 16, 11; Eph. 6, 12. A stratagem of magic the devil here employed, to conjure up the wealth and the glories of all earth's kingdoms in an alluring, almost irresistibly appealing picture, all in a moment of time, Luke 4, 5. The location of the exceeding high mountain here referred to is immaterial, also the question whether the picture was a physical demonstration or a mental suggestion. The main fact in Matthew's narrative is the refined subtlety, but also the extreme denseness of the tempter: V. 9. **And saith unto Him, All these things will I give Thee if Thou wilt fall down and worship me.** For an ordinary human being no proposition, in itself, could have been more attractive. What a dazzling picture of absolute sway over the world and possession of its glory was here offered to the lowly and rejected descendant of David! But what folly to presume upon the unlimited disposition of the wealth and grandeur of the world in the presence of Him who of right holds all the nations of the earth as His inheritance and the utmost ends of the world as His possession! The condition of Satan demanding homage to him as the superior was therefore almost naively awkward. But he staked all on this last powerful appeal to worldly ambition, involving the wilful yielding to the most heinous form of idolatry.

Jesus meets the insult with proper dignity: V. 10. **Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan; for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord, thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve.** Here Jesus rises in the power of His supreme authority, and passionately repels the Satanic suggestion. In the Greek we have here a single word: Begone! Out of My sight! It is a peremptory command. It terminates the disagreeable companionship which the devil had thrust upon the Lord. He applies the epithet "Satan" to the tempter, that is, adversary, enemy, 1 Kings 11, 14; Ps. 109, 6, since he not only interferes with Christ's Messianic work, but is, from the beginning, the arch-enemy of all mankind. Yet He condescends to support His majestic dismissal with a Scripture text, Deut. 6, 13, adapting it to the present circumstances. Jehovah alone is worthy of honor and glory and adoration; to Him only shall the ministering of divine service, of religious veneration, be made.

This last demonstration of almighty authority decided the day: V. 11. **Then the devil leaveth Him; and, behold, angels came and ministered unto Him.** The enemy's rout was complete, the glorious supremacy of the Lord, not only over man, but also over the spiritual world, had been established. For a season, at least, the devil departed from Him, Luke 4, 13. And angels came and acted as His servants, not primarily in bringing Him food, but in giving Him the assurance of the sympathetic understanding and the heavenly support which He now enjoyed on the part of all good spirits, thus ministering to Him with a comfort destined to sustain Him in the days to come. All Christians should take note: "This, however, is written for our consolation, that we know many angels serve us, whereas only one devil tempts us; if we but fight gallantly and stand, God will not let us suffer want. Rather must the angels come from heaven and become our bakers, waiters, and cooks, and serve us in every necessity. It is not written for the sake of Christ, who is not in need of it. If the angels have ministered unto Him, let them also serve us. . . . We should therefore be well equipped with God's Word, in order that we may defend and sustain ourselves with it. Our dear Lord Jesus Christ, who Himself conquered these temptations for our sakes, give us strength that through Him we may overcome and be saved." 34)

The Beginning of the Galilean Ministry and the Call of the Four. Matt. 4, 12—25

With a few rapid strokes the evangelist now sketches the opening of the Messianic work of Christ in Galilee. He is not so much concerned

33) Luther, 13, 1690.

34) Luther, 11, 545; 13, 1693.

about offering a chronological sequence of events as about grouping the incidents so as to present a continuous narrative. He here omits the return of Jesus to the Jordan, John 1, 35, His journey to Galilee, John 1, 41, the marriage at Cana, the trip to Capernaum and that to Jerusalem before the imprisonment of John, and His ministry in Samaria, John 3 and 4. He gives a summary of Christ's varied activities in the North by way of introduction: V. 12. **Now, when Jesus had heard that John was cast into prison, He departed into Galilee.** In his usual fearless manner, John the Baptist had felt no hesitation about reproving Herod Antipas, the ethnarch of Galilee and Perea, for his adulterous union with Herodias, his niece and already the wife of his half-brother, Herod Philip. The consequence was that the enraged princess caused his imprisonment, Luke 3, 19. 20; Mark 6, 17. John's last field of activity had been in Aenon, John 3, 23, and he probably had extended his labors into Galilee. When the mouth of this faithful witness had been silenced, Jesus knew that the time had come for Him openly to enter upon His work as prophet. His ministry in Galilee began when the Baptist's came to an end, John 3, 30.

His home town naturally came first: V. 13. **And leaving Nazareth, He came and dwelt in Capernaum, which is upon the sea coast, in the borders of Zabulon and Nephthalim.** The unpleasant reception which was accorded Him at Nazareth, Luke 4, 16—30, caused Him to make His stay there very brief. He went to settle, to make His home, in Capernaum, which appears throughout the gospel accounts as the center of the Lord's Galilean ministry. It was a thriving city on the Sea of Galilee, on the great road from Damascus to the Mediterranean Sea. In fulfilment of Christ's prophecy, Matt. 11, 23, this commercial metropolis was later so utterly destroyed that its very site in a region of ruined towns is doubtful, Tell Hum being now commonly conceded to have been the ancient location.[35])

The evangelist locates the city only sufficiently exactly to pave the way for another prophetic reference: V. 14. **That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying,** v. 15. **The land of Zabulon and the land of Nephthalim, by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles;** v. 16. **the people which sat in darkness saw great light; and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death light is sprung up.** What Isaiah had written, chapter 8, 22; 9, 1. 2, found its fulfilment in the ministry of Jesus in this region. Here the tribes Zebulun and Naphthali had formerly had their homes; their country lay towards or alongside of the sea: it was a place where races mix, a border population, mainly on this side, the west side of the Jordan, according to Hebrew usage of the word, or beyond Jordan, according to the Greek usage, containing a reference to Perea, which was also a scene of Christ's activity. Of this mixed population of Jews and Gentiles, in whose midst the Greek rulers had founded new cities with heathen customs and institutions, the evangelist says, in applying the words of the prophet, that they sat in darkness. The spiritual condition of the people was such as to represent an increase in religious blindness even over the time of Isaiah, nearly 700 years before. And the evangelist repeats the verb "sat." Theirs was an indifferent, sluggish attitude. The shadow of spiritual death had enveloped them. It effectually shut out the light of life streaming from the Old Testament prophecies. But now "Jesus Christ, the true Light, shone forth in the beauty of holiness and truth. Christ began His ministry in Galilee and frequented this uncultivated place more than He did Jerusalem and other parts of Judea. Here His preaching was peculiarly needful; and by this was the prophecy fulfilled." [36])

The form of Christ's message was familiar to the people: V. 17. **From that time Jesus began to preach and to say, Repent; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.** It had been uttered by John the Baptist in his urgent appeal for a change of heart. But with Jesus it had a greater significance. He must needs preach repentance in order to prepare the way for the proclamation of salvation. He acted, not as a guide to a distant and coming salvation, but as the herald of the kingdom of grace now at hand in Himself. His plea was for a change from the old to the new, from the prophecy and type to the fulfilment. In this way the day-star arose in Christ and His Gospel, and had now begun to shine upon those that were covered with darkness, in order that they might see this light and rejoice in its merciful illumination and warmth.

The calling of disciples one of Christ's first official acts: V. 18. **And Jesus, walking by the Sea of Galilee, saw two brethren, Simon, called Peter, and Andrew, his brother, casting a net into the sea; for they were fishers.** The Sea of Galilee, also called Lake Gennesaret, Luke 5, 1, and Sea of Tiberias, John 21, 1, is a small body of water formed by the river Jordan, having an average length of thirteen and an average width of about seven miles. Its water is fresh and clear, and contains an abundance of fish. The hills on its western shore are low and calcareous in nature; the mountains rising along the eastern shore are much more prominent. Jesus deliberately followed the path along the shore out from Capernaum, attended by a great multitude that insisted upon His preaching to them, Luke 5, 1. It was then that He saw Simon, whom He had called Cephas at the first meeting, John 1, 42, the Aramaic equivalent of Peter, and his brother Andrew, of Bethsaida, plying their trade as

35) Barton, *Archeology and the Bible*, 98.

36) Clarke, *Commentary*, 5, 60.

fishermen. Both of these men were not unknown to the Lord, having been with Him in the plains of the Jordan, John 1, 40—42, and later at Cana. Having come with Jesus into the neighborhood of their home, they had returned to their old occupation. At His word also they cast their nets into the sea for the miraculous draft, Luke 5, 4—6.

But the Lord had need of them: V. 19. **And He saith unto them, Follow Me, I will make you fishers of men.** V. 20. **And they straightway left their nets, and followed Him.** This was not a request for mere companionship, but an authoritative, though genial call to apostleship, couched in language which would appeal to their unlearned minds. They had been His disciples, but without special obligation as to attending Him; they were now chosen as His steady followers, to be trained for their great and high calling. "That was the beginning and the first call, namely, to hear the Gospel of Christ the Lord. For should they preach to others, they must first hear and learn it. Afterward, when they should preach to others, the Lord calls them by another call and gives them command how and wherein they should comport themselves, Matt. 10." [37] Jesus calls them, most appropriately, "fishers of men," since He wanted to train them to gain immortal souls for heaven, though they were but simple, unlearned men, "in order that the power and strength of God be indicated in this that He began such a great work with such lowly, simple people, and also performs it; in order that every one should understand that this is not done out of human power, but out of divine power and might." [38] In this way their secular employment served as the emblem of their spiritual calling. How deeply the presence and teaching of Christ had impressed these poor Galilean fishermen appears from the fact that there was no hesitation, no conferring with flesh and blood. At once they left their nets, gave up their earthly calling, forsook all, and followed Him, became His disciples and theological students.

Others joined them on the same day: V. 21. **And going on from thence, He saw two other brethren, James, the son of Zebedee, and John, his brother, in a ship with Zebedee, their father, mending their nets; and He called them.** V. 22. **And they immediately left the ship and their father, and followed Him.** This occurred in the same neighborhood as the event just recorded and in immediate conjunction with it, Luke 5, 10. John had probably been among those that followed Jesus at the Jordan, John 1, 35—40, and had, in the mean time, also told his older brother James of his wonderful experience. Therefore, although they were busily engaged with the routine of their calling, and although the call of Jesus implied the severing of family ties, there was just as little hesitation on their part. The honor of serving their Lord, even in poverty and humility, outweighs any and all temporal considerations.

With these men, as the nucleus of a loyal band of disciples, Jesus now entered upon His Galilean ministry, of which Matthew here gives a summary, in the form of an introduction to the succeeding chapters: V. 23. **And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogs, and preaching the Gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of disease among the people.** All of Galilee was His field of activity, not only Upper Galilee with its fertile valleys, but also Lower Galilee with its many prosperous villages dotting the landscape. In His journeyings back and forth Jesus was busily engaged, continually active, in the three functions of His ministry. He taught in the synagogs, or schools, of the Jews, principally by expounding the Old Testament; He preached the Gospel of the kingdom, the glorious news of the Messianic redemption; He healed the sick, not merely by mental suggestion, as many would have it, but by deliberate application of His divine power, for every form of disease and ailment was represented.

The result was natural: V. 24. **And His fame went throughout all Syria. And they brought unto Him all sick people that were taken with divers diseases and torments, and those which were possessed with devils, and those which were lunatic, and those that had the palsy; and He healed them.** Throughout the Syrian country, most likely along the road frequented by caravans, the accounts of the Lord's miraculous powers were spread. And so all those that were tormented or afflicted with any kind of ailment were brought to Christ by their relatives or friends. There is a formal catalog of diseases. There were minor painful disorders that required the touch of His healing hand. There were demoniacs, such as were subject to disease through the influence of unclean spirits; there were lunatics, or epileptics, upon whom changes in the sidereal bodies, especially the phases of the moon, had an ill effect; there were paralytics, those that were palsied as the result of nervous disorders and atmospheric changes. And of them all the evangelist has the same to say, telling it in just three words: "He healed them." The power of the sickness had to yield before the omnipotence of the divine Healer.

With His fame grew the number of His followers: V. 25. **And there followed Him great multitudes of people from Galilee, and from Decapolis, and from Jerusalem, and from Judea, and from beyond Jordan.** The extraordinary impression which this Prophet of Nazareth created was not confined to Galilee. People came from Decapolis, the southern part of Gaulanitis, southeast of Lake Gennesaret, whose population was predominantly

37) Luther, 11, 1910.
38) Luther, 11, 1917.

Grecian. They thought nothing of the long journey from the extreme South, from haughty Judea, from exclusive Jerusalem, from far-distant Perea, beyond the Jordan from Judea. All wanted to see and hear the man whose miracles were astounding the nation.

Summary. *Jesus, having successfully withstood the temptation of the devil after His forty-day fast, entered upon His Galilean ministry of teaching, preaching, and healing, Peter, Andrew, James, and John being His first disciples.*

THE JEWISH SYNAGOG.

The synagogs, or meeting-houses, which are mentioned so frequently in the New Testament, especially in the gospels and in the Acts, originated during, or in consequence of, the Babylonian captivity, probably as the result of the great need of common worship felt by all when the Temple lay in ruins. At the time of Jesus they were scattered over the whole country of Palestine, even in small towns, since ten persons of respectability were sufficient to compose a synagog. Jerusalem was credited with 480, or at least 460, of these houses of worship. Generally, a community would build its own synagog, or else depend upon the charitable assistance of neighbors, or even on private munificence, Luke 7, 5.

So far as the arrangement and the furnishing of the synagogs is concerned, the form was usually rectangular, with a central nave and aisles on either side, outside the columns supporting the roof. There was usually a women's gallery, supported on these colonnades. At one end of the structure was the holy chest, or ark, containing the scrolls of the Law and the prophets, which were written on long sheets of parchment or papyrus and rolled up on either end on a round rod. The ark was sheltered by a curtain, and steps led up to it. The holy lamp was never wanting, with its eternal light. The pulpit, or desk, from which the Law was read, was in the middle of the building. Those who read the Law stood, while he that preached or expounded the text sat down. Right before the ark, and facing the people, were the places of honor, where the elders sat, the seats or pews for the men filling the remaining space.

Public worship in the synagog was opened with the Shema, Deut. 6, 4—9; 9, 13—21; Num. 15, 37—41. It was preceded in the morning and evening by two benedictions, and succeeded, in the morning by one and in the evening by two benedictions. These are prayers of singular beauty, in the general tone of the psalms. These prayers before and after the Shema are contained in the Mishnah, and have remained practically unchanged to the present day. Then followed the prayers before the ark. They consisted of eighteen eulogies or benedictions called Tephillah. The first three and the last three of the eulogies are very ancient, and may well be said to have been in use in the time of our Lord. The prayers were spoken aloud by one man selected for the occasion, and the congregation responded with Amen. The liturgical part of the service was concluded with the Aaronic benediction, spoken by the descendants of Aaron or by the leader of the devotions.

After this followed the reading of the Law. Seven persons were called upon to read, and the lectionaries were arranged so that the Pentateuch (Books of Moses) would be read twice in seven years. On week-days only three persons were called upon to read the Law. After the Law came the reading of the prophets. At the time of Christ all the reading was accompanied by a translation into Aramaic by a "meturgeman," or interpreter.

After the reading of the prophets came the sermon or address. When a very learned rabbi gave a theological discussion, it was not spoken to the people directly, but a speaker gave a popular transcription of the discussion transmitted to him. The more popular sermon of a local elder or rabbi was termed a "meamar," a speech or talk, based, as a rule, upon a Scripture-passage, Luke 4, 17. After the sermon the services were closed with a short prayer.[39]

39) Clarke, *Commentary*, 5, 62; Schaff, *Commentary, Matthew*, 95; Edersheim, *Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, 1, 430—450; *In the Days of Christ*, chap. XVII; Dembitz, *Jewish Services in Synagog and Home*, Book II, chap. I; Gwynne, *Primitive Worship and the Prayer-Book*, chap. I; Mercer, *The Ethiopic Liturgy*, 29.

CHAPTER 5.

The Beatitudes. Matt. 5, 1—12.

The section of Matthew's Gospel included in chapters 5—7 is one of the most beautiful and impressive in the entire New Testament. In the simplest language, but with singular force and pertinency Jesus here gave a summary of His moral teaching, the doctrine "of the fruits and good works of a Christian," as Luther writes. For the Sermon on the Mount is not the proclamation of the Gospel, but preaching of the Law. To awaken and promote the realization and the sense, not only of comparative weakness and insufficiency in spiritual matters, but of a total and utter inability to think and speak and act in conformity with the holy will of God; to bring about the humiliating, but incidentally the most blessed conviction as to one's being wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked in spiritual things, Rev. 3, 17; and to teach the regenerated that without Him we can do nothing, and thus lead them on the way of true sanctification: that was the object of Christ in delivering this wonderful sermon.

The time and place for this great lesson were chosen by Jesus with particular care. He had spent the night in prayer on a mountain and had then separated twelve of His disciples to be apostles, Luke 6, 12—16. He was now on His way to the valley: V. 1 a. **And seeing the**

multitudes, He went up into a mountain. The people were crowding to Him in increasing numbers. They came to hear Him, they insisted upon touching Him, to be healed of various diseases, Luke 6, 17—19. To get away from the crowds below, whose eagerness threatened to overwhelm Him, Jesus ascended the mountain once more. Its name and location would be interesting for sentimental reasons only. On the higher slopes of the hill the people had no chance to throng Him: V. 1b. **And when He was set, His disciples came unto Him.** Not only the apostles, though they were surely in the front ranks, but His disciples in general, now become a considerable band, gathered about Him. To them His discourse was chiefly addressed, though the others were by no means excluded. Here was an ideal location to give instruction without distraction, far from the din of the jostling crowd, above the bustle and the sultry heat of the region below.

A solemn and dramatic description of the beginning of a weighty discourse: V. 2. **And He opened His mouth and taught them, saying.** It was a confidential, awe-inspiring communication of the great Teacher which the evangelist records, Job 3, 1; Dan. 10, 16; Ps. 78, 2. A well-prepared, carefully outlined discourse is given, in which reference to existing deplorable conditions was made with utter fearlessness. "That also, as stated above, belongs to a preacher that he does not keep his mouth closed, and not only publicly performs his office that every one must keep silence and permit him to come forth as one that has divine right and command, but also opens his mouth cheerfully and confidently, that is, to preach the truth and what is committed to him; not keep silence or speak indistinctly, but without dread and terror confess and speak plainly, without regarding or sparing any one's person, let it strike whom or what it will." 40) Jesus taught them, not only His disciples, but all whom His voice would reach. It was teaching that He gave them, not preaching; Jesus is here the Master and Teacher, not the Evangelist and Prophet.

His first words strike the key-note of the entire discourse: V. 3. **Blessed are the poor in spirit; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.** The reference of Jesus here is not primarily to temporal poverty, to earthly misery, as in other passages of the New Testament, 1 Cor. 1, 26—28; Jas. 2, 5. He is speaking of the poor and miserable "in spirit," those that shrink and cower with fear and dread, that are tremblingly alive to the wants and needs of their soul, that feel in their own heart, so far as spiritual riches are concerned, nothing but a great void, a despair of their own abilities, Matt. 11, 5. 28; Is. 61, 1; 62, 2; Ps. 70, 5. Such as these, who are conscious, painfully aware, of their moral deficiencies, the Lord calls blessed, happy. If they were still under the mistaken impression that they were spiritually rich and wanted nothing, they might deceive themselves into a false security which would prevent their gaining the true riches, the only abiding happiness. But as conditions are, no false pride will keep them from accepting the unsearchable riches of the kingdom of heaven, which are theirs by grace. For the kingdom of heaven is the sum total of all the gifts of God in Christ Jesus as they are enjoyed here on earth in the Christian Church and finally above, in the kingdom of glory. This being true, and the riches of the kingdom being even now in their possession, the disciples should strive all the more diligently to cultivate the poverty which the Lord here praises, and to exercise themselves in it daily.

Closely connected with this thought is the next: V. 4. **Blessed are they that mourn; for they shall be comforted.** The disciples are subject to conditions and circumstances which cause, which bring about, mourning, Luke 6, 21. 25; John 16, 20; Acts 14, 22. But the chief reason for their lamenting lies in the fact that they feel their spiritual poverty, grieving over the barrenness of their carnal nature, that separates them from the fountain of blessedness. This grief on account of the absence, because of the loss of spiritual possessions, is a deep and burdensome sorrow. It realizes, in keen repentance, sin and its results, both in him who grieves and in others. Its evil effects, however, shall be prevented lest they lead into despair. "As also Christ places just these words, and promises the consolation that they do not despair in their grief, nor let their heart's joy be taken entirely and extinguished, but mingle such mourning with the comfort and refreshment; otherwise, if they never had any comfort or joy, they would have to become faint and withered." 41) And therefore they will be comforted. Their bitter sorrow will be converted into ultimate, abounding consolation and gladness, Rom. 14, 17. The very Messianic kingdom with its message of hope is called the comfort of Israel, Luke 2, 25.

These two conditions form the prerequisite for the third beatitude: V. 5. **Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.** Their heart is not filled with self-righteousness, pride, and conceit. They are bowed down with grief, and therefore are ready and willing to endure with a meek spirit, Ps. 37, 11. To suffer and to bear uncomplainingly is their characteristic; there is no obstinate arrogance in their behavior. "For it will not fail to be forthcoming: thy neighbor will sometimes maltreat thee or otherwise overstep the bounds, either inadvertently or deliberately. If it be inadvertently, thou on thy part wilt not make it good by thy refusal or inability to bear it. But if it be malice, thou wilt but make him worse by

40) Luther, 11, 353. 354. For a practical, extensive application of the Sermon on the Mount, see 7, 350—677.

41) Luther, 7, 368.

hostile pawing and stamping; while he laughs and satisfies his desire to provoke thee to anger and do thee harm, in order that thou mayest have no peace nor enjoy what is thine with quietness." 42) The disciples of Christ, however, with meek and tender hearts, will be blessed and happy, since they have the promise of the earth as their inheritance. This statement, in its paradoxical form, is most startling. The expression, as the Lord uses it, cannot be referred to spiritual gifts only, though these doubtless are included. Jesus emphasizes the fact that meekness, by God's will, is a "world-conquering principle." As rightful lords of creation those whom the promise of Christ here concerns shall use God's temporal gifts with a good conscience, 1 Cor. 3, 22, and be sure that God's bounty will provide. "The expression 'inherit the earth' here means to possess all manner of goods here on earth. Not that each one should occupy a whole country, otherwise God would have to create more worlds, but the goods which God confers upon every one, that He gives him wife, children, cattle, house, home, and what belongs thereto, that he may remain definitely in the land where he lives and be master of his possessions, as Scripture commonly says." 43)

Having named a few negative virtues, the Lord next mentions some positive qualifications which should characterize His disciples: V. 6. **Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness; for they shall be filled.** This righteousness is not that of Christ, imputed by faith, in which case this one sentence of Gospel would be out of place in the admonitions concerning the life and behavior of His followers. It is the external righteousness before the world, the piety of life which He here urges. "Therefore understand here the external righteousness before the world, as we comport ourselves one toward another. That this, briefly and simply, is the meaning of these words: That is a truly blessed person that always continues and with all his might strives after this, that all things everywhere be in proper order and every person do right, and helps to hold and further such a condition with words and deeds, with counsel and action." 44) The disciples of Christ should hunger and thirst, be extremely eager for the possession of such piety, in order to receive the blessing of a full and complete satisfaction. This is God's reward of mercy for virtue, not only the happy conviction of things well done, but, according to His will, also temporal recompense, Ps. 37, 25; Is. 3, 10; Prov. 11, 18. 19; 14, 34, and finally an acknowledgment of the virtue in heaven, Ps. 36, 9; Rev. 7, 16; Ps. 17, 15.

One of the chief proofs of the Christian's piety is mercy: V. 7. **Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.** A heart filled with deep sympathy and sincere compassion for the temporal and spiritual need of the neighbor, that is deeply concerned for, and earnestly endeavors to do good to, all men, especially such as are of the household of faith, is well-pleasing to the Lord. And all the efforts thus made, insignificant as they may seem even in the Christian's own estimation, will receive, as a reward of mercy, the compassion of God Himself.

But hypocritical behavior will not stand the test of His scrutiny: V. 8. **Blessed are the pure in heart; for they shall see God.** A mere outward purity in keeping the ceremonial injunctions of the Law is not sufficient in the economy of God. He desires such hearts as keep themselves pure, unsullied with the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, Is. 1, 16; Jas. 4, 8; 2 Cor. 6, 17. But this purity finds its expression also in singlemindedness of purpose which throws off every restraining, distracting thought and seeks the Lord and His kingdom with undivided heart, Phil. 2, 12. Happy, blessed are they that are found practising such purity, for their reward again outstrips their fondest hopes. Even in this life they shall see God with the eyes of the spirit, lifting them up, in joyful confidence, to the God of their salvation, Is. 17, 7; Micah 7, 7; Ps. 25, 15. But the very essence of heavenly bliss will be the seeing of God face to face in the life to come, Ps. 17, 15; 42, 3; Job 19, 27.

A third positive Christian virtue, reflecting the perfection of Christ Himself: V. 9. **Blessed are the peacemakers; for they shall be called the children of God.** The disciples of Jesus are children of peace: they not merely have peace in their own souls through purity, they are not merely peace-loving, but they are active, strenuous promoters of peace in the midst of a world torn asunder by hatred, party interest, and every form of alienation, Rom. 12, 18; Ps. 34, 15; Mark 9, 50; 2 Tim. 2, 22; Heb. 12, 14. In using their best offices in the interest of assuaging passions, of settling sectional strife, they prove themselves true children of God, who has only thoughts of peace toward all men. This is their reward of grace: God is their Father, Christ is their Brother, heaven is their heritage, their home, 1 Pet. 3, 10. 11; Is. 57, 2.

It is inevitable that the reproach of Christ will strike the disciples in their endeavor to follow these rules, and so Jesus adds: V. 10. **Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.** In living these principles of Jesus and thus confessing Christ before men, the righteousness of the Christians' lives tends to make them conspicuous before men, to make them seem different from, morally cleaner than, the others. And therefore the children of the world will resent this aloofness, construing their attitude as a criticism of their own behavior. The hatred of the world because of this belief results in persecution, John 15, 19. The consolation of the followers of Christ, in

42) Luther, 7, 372.
43) Luther, 7, 369.
44) Luther, 7, 373.

that case, is that the various evidences of hatred which they must endure will be more than outweighed by their heritage, the kingdom of heaven.

Jesus applies this to His immediate disciples: V. 11. **Blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for My name's sake.** These are a few of the forms in which the hatred of the enemies will be likely to manifest itself. It is a persistent, continuous persecution by word and deed, especially hard to bear because of malicious lies which implied, and accused the disciples of, all manner of evil. There are two facts that serve to console them. The statements thus made are deliberate lies due entirely to violent prejudice. And the hatred of men strikes them for His name's sake. It is a distinction, an honor, to suffer in His interest, because they bear His name.

In spite of the persecutions, then: V. 12. **Rejoice, and be exceeding glad; for great is your reward in heaven; for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.** Joy, gladness in the highest measure is possible, an irrepressible exhibition of exultation is expected of Christ's followers. For all the hatred that can be poured out by the enemies cannot be measured against, cannot come into consideration in comparison with, the reward of grace in heaven. They will be more than amply repaid for all the disagreeable show of hatred which they were compelled to endure here, Rom. 8, 17. 18; 2 Cor. 4, 17. Another comfort which upholds them in their trial: they thereby become, in that respect at least, the equals of the prophets. It cannot be a source of lasting sorrow to endure for a time, knowing that the prophets of old were martyred in the same way, and yet endured the afflictions gladly for His name's sake, 2 Chron. 36, 16; Heb. 11, 33—40. Therefore, take up the work and endure the suffering of those that were before you, knowing that their reward will be yours also.[45])

The Chief Functions of the Disciples in the World. Matt. 5, 13—16.

The Lord continues to address His disciples directly: V. 13. **Ye are the salt of the earth; but if the salt have lost his savor, wherewith shall it be salted? It is thenceforth good for nothing but to be cast out and to be trodden under foot of men.** Having experienced the sanctifying power of the Word and Spirit of Jesus, the disciples are a salt. Note the four main qualities of salt: It is white and pure, it prevents rapid decay, it preserves nutriment and flavor, it renders the food palatable and healthy. The Christians are the salt of the earth; their business is to prevent its decay and putrefaction, to use every effort that the moral rottenness of the children of the world does not become excessive and render every class and age of society putrid by its infection, 1 Cor. 15, 33. This is not an easy task. But "our defiance, when things go badly, and when the world and the devil give us evil looks, and are as angry as they wish, is this, that He says to us: Ye are the salt of the earth. Where this word shines into the heart that it puts its trust in that and glories without doubting that we are God's salt, then let every one be thoroughly angry that will not laugh. I can and may put more defiance and boasting upon a single word of His than they upon their might, swords, and guns." [46]) If this salt now loses its flavor, it becomes insipid. This is true only of salt that undergoes a chemical process, either by being exposed to rain or by being stored for some length of time, as travelers from the Holy Land report. The figure of Christ is thus particularly apt. Insipid, saltless salt is really a contradiction in itself, and Christians that have lost their distinctive properties have ceased to influence their surroundings for good, have also lost their discipleship. As savorless salt has no value whatever and is treated as refuse; as a certain species of bituminous salt found in Judea which very rapidly became flat and tasteless was spread out in a court of the Temple to prevent slipping in wet weather, so the Christians that have ceased to apply themselves to their business of acting as a moral power in the world, will partake of the judgment of the world. Luther probably is right in saying: "Therefore I have always admonished, as Christ also does here, that salt remain salt and not become insipid, that is, that the chief article of faith be urged. For if that ceases, then not one piece can remain, and everything is lost; there is neither faith nor understanding, and no one can teach or counsel properly any more." [47])

The same admonition under a different figure: V. 14. **Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid.** V. 15. **Neither do men light a candle and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick, and it giveth light unto all that are in the house.** Christ is, strictly speaking, the only true light of the world, John 8, 12; 9, 5; 12, 35. But His disciples partake of His nature; they are a light in and through Him; they receive their illumination as well as their power to give light to others from Him, 1 Thess. 5, 5; Phil. 2, 15; Eph. 5, 8. Their illumination, like His, is therefore not confined to their immediate neighborhood, but is supposed to extend to the ends of the world. So self-evident is this thought that Christ merely refers to a fact well known to His hearers. Many cities of the Holy Land, probably some of the smaller ones visible from the hill where they were assembled, were located on prominent elevations, and all Jews were familiar with Mount Zion. Cities thus situated could not be hid, they were the most conspicuous objects in the entire landscape.

---

45) Cp. *Lehre und Wehre*, 1913, Mai–Juli.

46) Luther, 7, 406.

47) Luther, 7, 413.

The Christians, by virtue of their discipleship, are like such a light, like such a city. Their very difference makes them marked people. That is as it should be, that agrees with the nature and with the object of their calling. To light a candle or a light, one of the small lamps used in Palestine, and then to place it under an overturned measure, a *modius*, an earthenware grain measure holding a little more than a peck, might be done occasionally for special reasons. But the purpose of such kindling was evidently another. The lamp should be placed on a stand, a small projecting stone in the wall in the cottages of the poor, or a lamp-stand in the form of a tripod, which could easily be moved about in the house. Then only can a lamp serve its purpose, namely, to illumine the house.

Jesus Himself applies the parable: V. 16. **Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.** The policy of obscuration, of hiding beliefs and convictions, is often urged by lukewarm Christians, so-called "reasons of prudence and wisdom: gradual accustoming of men to new ideas; deferences to the prejudices of good men; avoidance of rupture by premature outspokenness; but generally the true reason is fear of unpleasant consequences to oneself." 48) To think and act thus is deliberate disloyalty to Christ. Your light, given to you from above, not to be used according to expediency, but to shine; your light, not you, the object being not to make your person prominent, but your Christianity. The Christians, individually and collectively, should perform this task as their steady work. For the light which shall be thrown out from them in every direction, before all men, consists in their good works, the fruits of their regeneration, the proof of their being illuminated by Jesus. These should be seen by the people for a definite reason. All men that come in contact with their works shall be forced to draw conclusions as to the power that inspires them. And so the glory, the honor will be placed where it properly and exclusively belongs, will be given to the Father in heaven. This fact renders the admonition urgent by giving to it its real basis. Faith is the lamp; love is the light; the good works are the illumination. As little as the lamp can pride itself upon its light, so little can the Christians glory in their good works; all glory must be God's.

Christ Confirms and Expounds the Law of Moses. Matt. 5, 17—37.

Good works Jesus has just urged. He now proceeds to give a definition of good works from the Law. He makes clear His position with regard to the Law: V. 17. **Think not that I am come to destroy the Law and the prophets. I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.** The teaching of the Kingdom, the Gospel which He came to proclaim, is a doctrine radically different from the teaching of Moses. But it does not invalidate the demands of the moral law as taught by Moses, it does not substitute a new moral law. Jesus rather emphasizes its proper understanding, and for that reason takes great pains to explain its spiritual content. He wants to fulfil, to bring out fully, the real import, to counteract the influence of the shallow, superficial explanation then in common use; and then to render a perfect obedience to the Law. He who might abrogate all its demands, who has power to modify any of its injunctions, places Himself under the Law, Gal. 4, 4, and, by fulfilling its every letter, cancels the law of the letter. And He fulfils the prophets. Whatever, in the revelation of the Old Testament, is type and prophecy, finds its completion, its realization in Christ the Redeemer, Col. 2, 17.

Note the emphasis of His assertion: V. 18. **For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the Law till all be fulfilled.** With a solemn oath Christ here affirms that the Law shall be retained also in the Church of the New Testament in the unabridged exercise of its strength. The whole Old Testament is a divine revelation, and so its minutest precept has religious significance which should find recognition and proper understanding in the New. So long as the earth shall stand, the sacredness of the Scripture of olden times shall remain so absolutely unimpaired that not even an iota, the smallest letter of the Hebrew alphabet, nor a tittle, the slight projecting point on some of its letters, shall fall to the ground. There is here a gleam of Gospel glory in the midst of the proclamation of the Law, implying a fulfilment which was to be made, and was in fact made, in and through the person of Jesus Christ.

In the mean time all men should know: V. 19. **Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven; but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.** Here is a conclusion. Since the above is Christ's view, He is bound to take His stand with reference to the transgressors of that rule. He that dissolves, abrogates, sets aside even those commandments that seem small and of little import, he that disregards as much as one of the little horns or hooks, whose presence or absence may, indeed, change the meaning of an entire passage, falls under Christ's sentence of condemnation, he is declared to be the least in the kingdom of heaven. The sincerity of his convictions will not be accepted as an excuse, and his fault will only be made greater by his extending the false opinion he holds by means of teaching. He shall be called the least, he shall be rejected in this kingdom, he shall be excluded from its glories. On the other hand, he that teaches in entire conformity with the Old Testament, that preaches not only the Gospel, but

48) *Expositor's Greek Testament*, 1, 103.

the Law in its great purpose of preparing the hearts, that keeps silence with regard to nothing, that does not add thereto nor take therefrom, he shall have a great name in the kingdom of heaven, he shall receive the reward of faithfulness. For this teaching is essential in educating men as to the true righteousness of life, in holding up before the Christians a proper rule of conduct.

How strongly this feature is brought out by the contrast: V. 20. **For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.** Not in the teachers of the people as they were then acknowledged, but only in Himself there would be the perfect realization of teaching and doing. The scribes were the accepted teachers of the Law, and many of them were members of the sect, or party, of the Pharisees. The chief accusation which Christ brought against these people is recorded in many passages of the Gospels; cp. Matt. 23. The feature of their doctrine and life was this, that they set aside the great for the little, the divine for the sake of the traditional. The result was a slavish observing of externals, which gave them a great show of piety before the people, an impression which they were very careful to nourish. So far as the great majority of these sectarians was concerned, their hearts were far from true piety and righteousness of the heart, which seeks, in true love of one's neighbor, to do the will of God in word and deed. Wherever such is the case, there is no faith, and therefore no idea of entering into the kingdom of heaven.

The Lord now proceeds to prove His condemning statement by expounding a few of the commandments of the Law according to their full spiritual significance: V. 21. **Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill: and, Whosoever shall kill, shall be in danger of the judgment.** They were accustomed to hear this in the regular synagog services, where the reading of the Law was never omitted. It was said both to them of old time, Ex. 20, 13; Deut. 5, 17; Gen. 9, 5. 6, and by them of old time, in the precepts delivered by tradition from father to son as well as by the teachers of the people, 2 Chron. 17, 7—9, but the addition, fixing the penalty, was made in the interpretation of the rabbis. But by this explanation the meaning of "kill" was restricted to actual murder, and the commandment of God became a mere external legal enactment. The end of the transgression was penalized, but the beginning, in desires, in thoughts, in words, was not restrained. "Behold, that is the beautiful holiness of the Pharisees, which can cleanse itself, and remain pious, so long as it does not kill with the hand, though the heart be filled with anger, hatred, and envy, the tongue also with cursing and blaspheming." [49]

Christ's exposition is not so narrow: V. 22. **But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment; and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council; but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell-fire.** The statement of the Lord is very general: Every one, none excepted; it is a universal prohibition of angry passion. He that gives way to such wrath is guilty of judgment, of condemnation. Anger against a brother, any member of the human family, is a deadly sin. It should properly come under the jurisdiction of the council or court, Deut. 16, 18; 2 Chron. 19, 5. This is speaking relatively. The person that gives way to anger is as great an offender in God's sight as the one that slays his brother in cold blood, Gal. 5, 20; Col. 3, 8; Jas. 1, 19. 20. The same condemnation, but with greater emphasis, falls upon him that cannot control his anger, permitting it to burst forth in maledictions. Raca is an Aramaic word meaning an empty head, a stupid. The one using angry epithets of this nature is guilty of the Sanhedrin, the supreme council of the Jews that tried the worst offenses and inflicted the severest penalties. Anger that is not quickly controlled will become hatred combined with contempt, and freely indulge in railing, 1 Pet. 3, 9. A still greater insult lies in the epithet, "Thou fool," which was used to denote a good-for-nothing, hopeless, helpless, morally worthless fool, and expressed contempt for a man's heart and character. This expression of utter disregard of the fellow-man's position in the eyes of God is an offense equal to that of murder, it is a damnable sin, 1 John 3, 15; Rev. 21, 8. It is punishable by the fire of Hinnom, the valley where the refuse of Jerusalem was burned — a figure often used by Jesus in speaking of the punishment of hell-fire.

Jesus presents the positive side of His exposition: V. 23. **Therefore, if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee,** v. 24. **leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way, first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.** The forgiving attitude is pictured from a happening which was very frequent among the Jews, with which they were thoroughly familiar. A Jew might bring his Corban, his gift, used of every kind of bloody and unbloody sacrifice which was brought to the Temple, Matt. 8, 4; 15, 5; 23, 8. But in the very act of handing it to the officiating priest at the altar there comes the remembrance. It suddenly flashes into his mind that he has been guilty of an act or a word which might have provoked a brother. The natural way of dealing with the situation might seem to be to keep on with the worship, get through as quickly as possible, and then hurry to make peace with the offended. But Christ tells us to interrupt our worship and go on the errand of seeking forgiveness first,

49) Luther, 7, 429.

though it may seem profane to do so. It is more important that the heart be free from anxiety for a brother's peace of mind than that an external rite be performed: mercy before sacrifice. There will be plenty of time for sacrificing afterward. Cp. Is. 58, 4—7.

The same truth in a different parable: V. 25. **Agree with thine adversary quickly, whiles thou art in the way with him, lest at any time the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison. V. 26. Verily, I say unto thee, Thou shalt by no means come out thence till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing.** The picture is that of a debtor on the way to court with his creditor, Deut. 21, 18; 25, 1, who is his adversary, but probably might be found willing to come to terms outside of court. The advice is that the debtor be in a very conciliatory mood, ready and eager to straighten out the difficulty without litigation. In case a settlement would not be effected in this manner, the danger would be that the adversary, losing all patience, would deliver and even forcibly drag the debtor before the judge, secure a favorable decision, have this carried out by the officer of the court, and have the satisfaction of seeing him taken to prison. All hopes of obtaining mercy would then be shattered. For even the last *quadrans*, the fourth part of a Roman *assarion*, which was worth not quite two cents, would be demanded of him. Payment would be exacted to the last fraction of a penny. A very earnest admonition not to wait or hesitate about coming to terms with our adversary, with any one whom we owe reconciliation. The brief period of life is soon behind us, and the implacable that refused to agree will find in the Lord an equally implacable Judge.

A lesson from the Sixth Commandment: V. 27. **Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery. V. 28. But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.** The Sixth Commandment had indeed been given to "them of old time," Ex. 20, 14; Deut. 5, 18. But it was understood by the Jewish teachers of the sin in deed only, of the deliberate unfaithfulness of those joined in wedlock, or the carnal intercourse of the unmarried. Many rabbis expressly stated that the evil thought should not be regarded on a level with the sinful act.[50] Christ's explanation opens the deeper meaning of the commandment. He finds the beginning of adultery in the deliberate nourishing of the awakening lust of the heart. A woman may be seen, come within the range of vision of a man, and there is no wrong in the act. Ordinary human intercourse would be impossible without it. But when the look turned upon any woman, married or unmarried, is deliberate and intentional, conscious and persistent, as on a person of the opposite sex, and this is followed by an impure desire of coveting her for immoral purposes, then adultery has in fact been committed, although the sin is hidden deeply in the heart.

Christ's advice to the tempted: V. 29. **And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out and cast it from thee. For it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell. V. 30. And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off and cast it from thee. For it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell.** The right eye and the right hand are named as prominent members in the actual committing of sin, through which the evil desire of the heart finds its expression. They are represented as the organs of temptation. According to popular view, they are the members that offend, that incite to the actual commission of sin. Therefore, symbolically speaking, these members and all the members of the body must be controlled, if necessary, by an absolute and painful renunciation. Better to be without individual organs and members of the body than have the whole body condemned. Christ speaks figuratively, and His words must be understood in the spiritual sense; for mutilation evidently may prevent the outward act, but will not kill the desire. Every member of the body shall be so controlled and governed by the sanctified will that it will not yield to sin, thus bringing the whole body into condemnation. Jesus again uses the figure of the perpetual fires of the valley of Hinnom, where the waste and refuse of the city of Jerusalem was burned, for the punishment of hell. "This, then, is the meaning: If you feel that you look upon a woman with evil lust, then pluck that eye or vision out as being contrary to God's commandment, not of the body, but of the heart from which the burning and desire proceeds, then have you torn it out rightly. For when the evil lust is out of the heart, then the eye will also not sin nor offend you, and you will look upon the same woman with the same eyes of your body, but without desire, and it will be as though you had not seen her. For no longer is that eye there which was there before, which is called an eye of burning or desire, although the eye of the body remains uninjured." [51]

A further illustration: V. 31. **It hath been said, Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement. V. 32. But I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery; and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced, committeth adultery.** The form in which Jesus here speaks indicates that He disapproves of their literal interpreta-

50) Tholuck, *Bergrede Christi*, on v. 27.

51) Luther, 7, 448.

tion of the permission granted by Moses, Deut. 24, 1. The Mosaic law was given in the interest of the woman, to give her at least some show of right. But the Jewish doctors, concerned only about the outward form and about getting the bill of separation into due legal shape, permitted a license which was soon carried to scandalous and criminal excesses. Pouncing upon the phrase: "She find no favor in his eyes," they permitted divorces when a man found a handsomer woman, when he was displeased with his wife's cooking, when he did not find her manners agreeable. Only the bill or letter of separation must be made out, that formality was insisted upon. But such a deliberate breaking of the marriage-tie, though it be sanctioned by the civil courts, has no validity before God. The Lord recognizes only one reason for divorce, when there is a plain case of unfaithfulness, of adultery, of any unlawful intercourse of a married person with any other person but the lawful spouse. In this case a divorce may be secured, but is not commanded. "We neither command nor hinder such divorce, but leave it to the government to act. . . . But to give advice to such as want to be Christians, it would be far better to admonish and urge both parties to stay together, and that the innocent spouse be reconciled to the guilty one (if this one were humble and willing to amend) and forgive in Christian love." 52) If any other reason is alleged and the divorce brought about, adultery is committed, both by the complainant, in severing the marriage-tie, and by the accused that permits the frivolous dissolution. In the same way he that marries a woman divorced from her lawful husband, to whom she still belongs before God, is an adulterer in the eyes of the Lord.

An illustration from the Second Commandment: V. 33. **Again, ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths.** V. 34. **But I say unto you, Swear not at all, neither by heaven, for it is God's throne;** v. 35. **nor by the earth, for it is His footstool; neither by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great king.** V. 36. **Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black.** V. 37. **But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay; for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil.** Jesus introduces the subject as before, referring to the customary reading of the Law and the accompanying teaching. The implication of Christ is that the people were really kept under a false impression, by being permitted to draw the conclusion that they were listening to the exact words of Moses. The words as stated are indeed found in the Law, Lev. 19, 12; Num. 30, 3; Deut. 23, 22. But the interpretation left much to be desired. It placed no emphasis upon the inner truthfulness of the heart. If that is missing, what object have all oaths? All the careful distinctions as to degrees of oaths, and therefore of perjury, were a yoke on the necks of the Jews that did not affect their hearts. And it was a matter of mere sophistical quibbling that permitted all manner of affirmations in which the divine name was not mentioned directly, Deut. 6, 13, and thus evaded the obligation of the oath. There is not the slightest difference between an oath in the name of God and such asseverations as substitute the names of holy things, heaven, or such over which God alone has control: His city, Jerusalem, the earth, His footstool, a man's head or life. All these oaths involve a reference to God. And all of them, as He distinctly specifies them, one after the other, are superfluous where the heart is pure and truthful. The Lord distinctly condemns the incessant, frivolous calling upon the Deity in all kinds of garbled forms. He does not imply that oaths, under circumstances, are not altogether lawful and right. "In civil life the most truthful man has to take an oath because of the untruth and consequent distrust prevailing in the world, and in so doing he does not sin against Christ's teaching. Christ Himself took an oath before the high priest." 53) His demand is absolute truthfulness and straightforwardness in the dealing of people with one another. There the affirmation shall have the full value and force of the Yea, and the denial the simple power of the Nay, that there may be an unhesitating dependence upon all statements, without the support of an oath. Anything that goes beyond this simple definition is of evil, even savors of the influence of the evil one, the devil, the father of lies. Jesus expressed Himself mildly with a purpose, and did not deny the necessity of oaths in a world full of falsehood. "I know, He means to say, that in certain circumstances something beyond yea and nay will be required of you. But it comes of evil, the evil of untruthfulness. See that the evil be not in you."

The Law of Love toward the Enemy.

Matt. 5, 38—48.

V. 38. **Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.** Jesus here refers to the law of retribution, or compensation, as contained in the Levitical ordinances, Ex. 21, 24. This is said to the government, and is a sound principle for the instruction of the judge: Fair compensation should be granted for injuries received. But the scribes and Pharisees applied the statement to the relation of every person toward his neighbor. They taught and declared that every one had the right to take revenge and to exact compensation for himself. Christ goes on record as differing from this explanation: V. 39a. **But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil,** either by trying to prevent injury

52) Luther, 7, 452.

53) *Expositor's Greek Testament*, 1, 111.

or by demanding revenge for it, by repelling one outrage with another. He had excellent authority for His explanation, Lev. 19, 18; Prov. 24, 29. Christian love must be willing to bear and to forbear, though a defense of right is permitted, John 18, 23; Acts 23, 3; 22, 25. If this were not true, it would follow that all outrages would go unchallenged, and a Christian would lose house and home, wife and children, as Luther says. But a disciple of Christ should be willing and patient in suffering, even wrongfully, and not seek revenge nor return evil for evil.

Christ brings out this fact by a few examples: V. 39b. **But whosoever shall smite thee on the right cheek, turn to him the other also.** V. 40. **And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also.** V. 41. **And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain.** There is a climax in the examples chosen by Christ; injury goes from bad to worse. There will be times and circumstances when love will be ready patiently to suffer the repetition of the same injury: the disgrace of being struck with the palm of the open hand, the humiliation of giving up the more costly mantle or toga together with the tunic or undergarment, the demand and even the compulsion, coming probably from a soldier, to accompany him for some distance and assist him with his baggage. A Christian will, so far as his person alone is concerned, render such exacted service cheerfully and do more than is asked, rather than submit to the inevitable in a sullen manner. On the other hand, of course, such passive behavior must cease as soon as it comes into conflict with the law of love. A disciple of Christ has duties toward his family, his community, his country, which will sometimes compel him to protect and defend them against injustice and insult. But for the individual it is true: he that magnanimously bears, overcomes. Rather than harbor evil, vengeful thoughts and desires, the Christian will be ready to render assistance whenever this is needed: V. 42. **Give to him that asketh thee; and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away.** To give and to lend are two duties of charity which Christ puts on a level, both guided by prudence and the interest of the neighbor, 2 Thess. 3, 10; Prov. 20, 4. Stewards of God's bounty will have to give an account at the last day, and their sentence may depend largely upon the manner in which they appreciated the trust of God. All such assistance rendered to the needy neighbor should be given cheerfully, without a thought of reward.

Final illustration, from the general law of love: V. 43. **Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbor, and hate thine enemy.** The first injunction is found in the Law, Lev. 19, 18. The second part of the sentence is an addition made by the rabbis. They understood the word "neighbor" of the members of their own nation only, arguing from the many passages of the Law in which God had commanded the children of Israel to destroy the heathen nations. But in all those instances the children of Israel were merely carrying out God's penal justice. Their argument would therefore not stand, especially in view of Ex. 22, 21; 23, 9; Lev. 19, 33; Deut. 10, 18. 19; 24, 17; 27, 19. Jesus insists that all hatred is contrary to humaneness, opposed to the spirit which He was striving to foster. His is a different law: V. 44. **But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you.** The injunction receives its application at all times and in all places. The impressiveness of the passage is heightened by the contrast presented in each member of the saying. Cursing is met with blessing; hatred, which leads to injuries, with well-doing; and abuse of all kinds, culminating in persecution arising from religious hatred, with prayer and intercession. Whatever meanness the enemies may devise, love's ingenuity will find a way of overwhelming them with goodness. For its object is always to find ways and means of winning the adversary, and, above all, of gaining him for the Lord.

Such behavior is in agreement with the true nature of Christians: V. 45. **That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven; for He maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust** — to become and to be indeed the children of God, to possess and exhibit the likeness of the heavenly Father. Because His heart is filled with goodness toward all His creatures, because He makes no distinction between righteous and unrighteous, between good and evil in His providence, they shall partake of their Father's nature. For with absolute impartiality, and with no reference to individual character, whether niggardliness or generousness is more in evidence, He causes His sun to rise and sends His rain. Just so there should be neither indifference nor ignorance, but earnest concern and kind benevolence in the hearts of those who are striving sincerely to resemble the great Friend and Benefactor above.

And there is also the moral distinction: V. 46. **For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? Do not even the publicans the same?** V. 47. **And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? Do not even the publicans so?** That is the usual, the customary way of dealing in the world: Kind deeds are rewarded with kind deeds, friendly words are given in return for friendly words. That is the height of human morality. The word "salute" may be taken in its literal sense, as a mere greeting, for even so much the Jews denied the Gentiles. Or it may imply friendly relations and a readiness to serve, as became those that were united in the same confession. Outside

of that they knew nothing, more they refused to do, John 4, 9b. Such a low moral level is not for the disciples of Christ. He expects them to distinguish themselves above the average morality, to carry out the ambition to excel, actually to be superior to a spirit characterized by smallness and meanness. The latter spirit might be expected in the publicans, the tax-collectors of Palestine, who were heartily disliked as being the representatives of the Roman power, and for their cheating and exactions. It is not a Pharisaic pride and arrogance that the Lord wishes to awaken, but the earnest desire to be elevated above a mere customary etiquet, which may become the most refined form of cruelty. A significant fact: Jesus finds something good even in the social outcasts!

A summary of this section: V. 48. **Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.** Since all these arguments must be accepted, and since love is the fulfilment of the Law, the Lord draws His conclusion. Ye who wish to be counted as My disciples shall stand out in contrast with those whose idea of altruism is modeled after conventional standards. Nothing short of the great ideal shall satisfy you. With a single-mindedness of purpose that forgets all else they shall strive after perfection in accordance with their great model, their Father in heaven. God is perfect, the fulness, the consummation, of all good. And the perfection of the Christians consists in striving after those ideals which God has set before them in His holy will. Thus they are daily and continually renewed in knowledge, and in holiness and righteousness, after the image of Him that made and redeemed them, until the day of their final perfection will dawn in heaven.

Summary. *Christ opens the Sermon on the Mount with the beatitudes, gives a short outline of the call of the disciples in the world, shows the spiritual understanding of the Law by a number of examples, and teaches love toward one's enemy and true altruism.*

CHAPTER 6.

Of Giving of Alms, Praying, and Fasting.

Matt. 6, 1—18.

The first part of Christ's sermon had treated of the right interpretation of the Law, shown by many examples. From scribe law He now passes to Pharisaic practise, holding up the false righteousness in its hollow mockery. A very prominent feature in the religious life of the Pharisees: V. 1. **Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them: otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven.** The reference to a universal practise would be understood at once by all. It is a warning against the common form of showing probity, of practising charity in the sight of all men, with the intention of bringing one's own person into prominence. Christ's idea is that the good works shall be seen and speak for themselves, but that the person of the doer be kept entirely in the background. The Pharisees took great pains that they should be seen while performing works which they falsely thought good. Theirs was a theatrical virtue; they sought only their own honor, a reputation as saints. Any one thinking himself a disciple of Christ, but guilty of such hypocritical ostentation, can expect no reward from the heavenly Father, and is foolish for indulging in a hope based upon such a false foundation. He has nothing in common with the disposition of the Lord.

The false way to give alms: V. 2. **Therefore, when thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do, in the synagogs and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily, I say unto you, They have their reward.** Christ mentions no names, but with one word characterizes those that make a show of their charity. Hypocrites they are, actors; they are acting for effect, there is nothing real and sound about the righteousness they affect. The sounding of trumpets, the attracting of attention was their object, not the helping of the poor. When the collection was made in the synagogs, they were most prominent in the act, though not in the gift. When beggars stopped them on the street, they were sure to attract the attention of all passers-by before making a show at almsgiving. They want the glory which properly belongs to God alone, chapter 5, 16. In bitter irony, Christ says of them that they have their reward. The word is taken from the language of the banks. "They can sign the receipt of their reward: their right to receive the reward is realized, precisely as if they already had given a receipt for it." 54) They have nothing more to expect, they will get nothing from God.

The right way to practise charity: V. 3. **But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth, v. 4. that thine alms may be in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret, Himself shall reward thee openly.** Not the act of almsgiving was condemned by Christ, but only the manner. The work was well-pleasing to Him. Give with simplicity of heart, with so little show of self-glorification that even the left hand, so to speak, shall not be admitted into the secret, lest the satisfaction which one may feel on account of having done another good work detract from God's glory. The works shall shine brightly, but the donor shall remain hidden to all but God, who knows the secrets of men's hearts and actions. He knows all the

54) Deissmann, *Bibelstudien*, 229.

sacrifices that are made, and at the proper time He will give the reward of mercy; He will make public announcement on the day when He will reveal everything.

The wrong manner of praying: V. 5. **And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are; for they love to pray standing in the synagogs and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men.** Prayer is the communion of the soul with God, a confidential imparting of all needs, desires, and conditions of feeling to the heavenly Father. The faithful Israelites had the custom of observing the hours of prayer, either in their own homes or in some secluded spot in the Temple, Dan. 6, 10; Acts 3, 1. But the Pharisees proved themselves true actors also here. They love to stand, it is dear to their hearts, they make a practise of it which is pleasing to their vanity and conceit. Standing in the most conspicuous places, in the synagog before the assembled congregation, at the corners of the streets, at cross-roads, where they might expect a great number of loungers and passers-by to watch them in gaping admiration, they made their prayers. Their real object was, of course, to be observed of men, to attract attention, for which purpose their very standing posture was an ostentation. Strange that the hour of prayer always overtook them in the most public places!

The true manner of praying: V. 6. **But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly.** An emphatic contrast, "But thou." Be as different from these hypocrites as possible, lest thy manner of praying savor of their hypocrisy. Christ does not restrict the praying to fixed hours. Whenever you feel the need of communing with God, as often as you wish to be undisturbed with Him alone. For such a purpose a room in the interior of the house or on the housetop, secluded from all interference and intrusion, will be found most appropriate. Christ advises even the shutting of the door to emphasize the intimacy which such a prayer implies. Here, with no one to disturb you, with no one present but Him who is in the secret places, whose omnipresence invites you freely to confide in Him, you may open your heart freely, even in regard to matters which may fitly be hidden before the eyes of the whole world. Every one accustomed to private prayer after this description of the Lord will receive full edification also from the public prayer in home devotions and in congregational worship. His heart has been trained to be centered in the Lord alone and to banish all distracting thoughts. Note especially that the Lord emphasizes "thy Father," which tenderly invites and urges childlike trust and confidence. "Though I be a sinner and unworthy still I have here God's command, which commands me to pray, and His promise that He will mercifully hear me, not on account of my worthiness, but for the sake of the Lord Christ. With this trust thou canst put away all thoughts and doubts, and kneel down cheerfully and pray, not regarding thy worthiness or unworthiness, but thy trouble and His word, in which He commands you to put confidence." 55)

A lesson in regard to the form of prayer: V. 7. **But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do; for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking.** The chief characteristic of the prayers in heathen worship is a gabbling or babbling, a repetition without end of the same forms of words, 1 Kings 18, 26; Acts 19, 34. Such customs were familiar to the Jews as well as to the Galileans, on account of the mixed population and the presence of strangers in their midst. The idea supporting such meaningless repetitions seems to have been that the very flood of words should argue for the sincerity of the worshiper and practically weary the gods into complying with their wishes.

Warning against such absurd practises: V. 8. **Be not ye therefore like unto them; for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of before ye ask Him.** The Christians should differ from the heathen by a sharp distinction. They shall not be like the heathen; there shall be no point of resemblance between their worship and that of the heathen. Their idea of prayer is essentially unlike that of the Gentiles. "Prayer requires more of the heart than of the tongue. The eloquence of prayer consists in the fervency of desire and the simplicity of faith. The abundance of fine thoughts, studied and vehement motions, and the order and politeness of the expressions, are things which compose a mere human harangue, not a humble and Christian prayer. Our trust and confidence ought to proceed from that which God is able to do in us, and not from that which we can say to Him." 56) Another point bringing out the absurdity of babbling prayers: our needs are known to God before we make them known in our prayers. As a true Father He is concerned about the wants and troubles of His children, and gets His information often before they are aware of their lack, Is. 65, 24. "God commands us to pray, not indeed that we with our prayer should teach Him what He should give, but rather that we should realize and confess what kind of goods He gives to us, and will and can give much more; so that by our prayer we instruct ourselves more than Him." 57)

A model prayer to show that an infinite variety of wants and requests can be compressed into a few humble petitions: V. 9. **After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name.** It does not detract from the value of

55) Luther, 7, 503.
56) Clarke, *Commentary*, 5, 84.
57) Luther, 7, 506.

the prayer that many of its words and thoughts are found in the Old Testament and in the formulas in use among the Jews at that time. The marvel of its beauty lies rather in this, that the Lord arranged the petitions with reference to the importance of human wants and imbued them with His spirit, thus making the brief formula the most perfect prayer in the world. Note how He brings out this point. Thus, after this manner, not after that of the heathen, shall be your habitual prayer, for you are people who stand in a different relation to the Deity, you know the one, true God, to whom all prayers should be addressed. Father, He calls Him, to bring out the sonship of the believers. Their confidence and trust in Him is that of children sure of the father's love. He is our Father, in the fullest sense, by His work of creation as well as by that of redemption. He is the almighty God and Lord, who reigns in heaven over all the universe and thus possesses the willing power to hear our prayer, Eph. 3, 14. 15; 4, 6; Is. 66, 1; Acts 7, 55. 56. His name, the entire manifestation of His essence, the revelation of His being, which distinguishes Him and gives an idea of His greatness, Ps. 48, 11; Mal. 1, 11, shall be hallowed, praised, glorified. This is done not only by holding Him in all esteem and reverence, by yielding to Him the position which is His by eternal right, by making Him the one object of worship the world over, but by leading such lives that every desire, thought, word, and deed will redound to His glory, chapter 5, 16.

His majesty, power and might, omnipresence, and omniscience having been confessed, the thought follows: V. 10. **Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven.** The kingdom of heaven, the sum total of the gifts and mercies of God in Jesus, which God has intended for all men and which is realized as the kingdom of grace in the believers, shall come. God must grant faith and keep us in faith and thus in His kingdom. John 15, 1—5. But our prayer is also for others, that God may open their hearts and minds to the glorious news of their salvation by sending faithful pastors and missionaries, and that he would soon merge the Church militant into the Church triumphant. This petition implies that such is the good and gracious will of God. It follows, then, that this will of God should be perfectly, ideally done and fulfilled, and that all opposing forces should be broken and hindered. Incidentally, His will and allowance in our own lives should be carried out. Whatever of suffering and trials He is pleased to put upon us shall be borne willingly, since the angels themselves are models in the doing of God's will. At all times, in all places, in all things we pray that His will be done.

Temporal gifts are also included: V. 11. **Give us this day our daily bread.** In putting the petition in this form, Christ teaches humility and frugality. For this day we pray, taking no thought for the morrow, not yielding to anxious care. And the daily bread we are to ask for, that which is sufficient for the present day, enough to nourish us from day to day.[58] God, in His infinite goodness, includes much more than the things which are necessary for our bare existence, as Luther shows in his explanation of this petition.

One of the greatest spiritual and temporal needs: V. 12. **And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.** We daily contract an enormous, an unbelievable amount of debts before God. And the more we desire the fulfilment of the first petitions, the more conscious we shall be of our shortcomings. This debt, in its nature, being an account of God against us, whether the sin is committed directly against Him, or whether it harms the neighbor and thus transgresses His Law, must stand charged against us forever, rendering us subject to the debtor's damnation, Matt. 18, 24. 25, unless we receive forgiveness, a full and free pardon from the free mercy of God in Jesus, which we here plead for. Revenge and hatred can, of course, not be in any man's heart when he prays this petition. The more conscious a person is of his own mistakes and shortcomings, the more indulgent his heart will be toward the faults of others, even when committed against himself. It would condemn him to everlasting damnation if his forgiveness would not be patterned after that of his heavenly Father, vv. 14. 15.

A final plea for help: V. 13a. **And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.** There are not many that reach the heights of moral heroism by which they welcome persecutions, Matt. 5, 10; Jas. 1, 2. For the average Christian the thought of temptation and trial is in itself depressing. The petition not to be exposed to moral trial, to violent assaults of Satan, to such circumstances as are extremely hard to bear for mere flesh and blood, is therefore very necessary. God sometimes, for reasons of His own, suffers or permits a temptation to come near a Christian, in order to test and strengthen his faith, 1 Cor. 10, 13. We ask that He would so lead us and cause us to walk circumspectly that no evil results of the temptation may strike us, that the final outcome may ever be beneficent. This is included in the "deliver" of the last sentence. Since trials and temptations are sure to come, therefore we turn to God to draw us out of their snares, out of their bondage, and especially to deliver us from the evil one, the devil, who makes use of every occasion to bring us into his power. Thus every possible contingency in the life of the average human being is provided for. And so the doxology is most appropriate: V. 13b. **For Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.** He is our great King and Ruler, who has our well-being at heart; He

58) Cp. Potwin, *Here and There in the Greek New Testament*, 182—193; *Theol. Quart.*, 22, 25—43.

is the almighty God, in whose power lies the fulfilment of our every need; to Him we therefore intend to give all honor and glory for all the gifts and benefits which He showers upon us so freely. Of this we are so sure that we close the Lord's Prayer with a fervent Amen, to indicate our faith and trust in our Father.[59]

A necessary warning: V. 14. **For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you.** V. 15. **But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.** The hearing of our prayer, the granting of the benefits asked for, hinges upon our being in the right relation toward God, which is brought about by the assurance and the certainty of the forgiveness of sins. And this, in turn, depends upon the manner in which we show proofs of the right condition of our hearts toward the neighbor. Our sins toward God were called debts, and these are piled up with horrible swiftness. Our neighbor's sins toward us are described as mere stumblings or faults in performing his duty. To be vindictive under such circumstances is folly in itself, and argues that the mercy of God is not appreciated. If we really desire the forgiveness of God, we must first show that we realize our own sinfulness and its damnableness by forgiving our neighbor his faults.

A lesson on fasting: V. 16. **Moreover, when ye fast, be not as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance; for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.** Fasting was a part of the religious rites of the Jews, intended to show repentance and humility, in itself an unobjectionable custom. But the hypocrites, acting out their part in all lines, made their fasting another form of self-glorification, not only by observing additional days of fasting, besides those prescribed in the Jewish law, but also by affecting a gloomy face, inviting sympathy and praise. They neglected the daily care of the face, to make the effect of the semiweekly fast appear all the more harrowing. It was an empty show in order that they might play a more important figure and get the reputation of greater holiness. They have all the reward they will ever get. They need expect nothing from the Lord.

The proper method of fasting: V. 17. **But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head and wash thy face,** v. 18. **that thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly.** Again the Lord emphasizes the contrast. A mere outward show of repentance without change of heart does not befit the followers of Jesus. Fasting they may practise indeed; that is a laudable custom and may be productive of good. But in doing so, all ostentation must be avoided. It is the heart that should feel the sorrow and humility, not the body. Therefore the usual daily washing and anointing should not be omitted, in order that men might not even know the conditions. God, their heavenly Father, that lives in the secret places, whose omniscience searches minds and hearts, will know. At the proper time He will make the necessary revelations and grant the reward of mercy.

Warning against Covetousness and Care.

Matt. 6, 19—34.

A new topic, introducing an exposition of the first table of the Law: V. 19. **Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal.** The question of hoarding, the service of Mammon, demanded discussion in connection with righteousness of works and self-righteousness. For it is the self-conceited that is liable to become addicted to covetousness. How foolish such hoarding! The Lord scourges the sin in bitter scorn: to hoard up hoards, treasures of this earth, tainted with the curse of this earth, subject to the corruption of the earth. Whether it be garments, tapestry, and carpets, moths would destroy them, rust, mildew, canker would eat them; and whether it be gold and silver and jewels, thieves would find a way to steal them, even if they must dig through the wall of the house. What uncertain treasures to place your trust upon!

The only safe treasures: V. 20. **But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal.** V. 21. **For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.** The repetition of the same words serves for emphasis. Treasures you may and shall have, of the right kind. Treasure the treasures of the only lasting kind, in heaven, heavenly treasures, the gift and possession donated by God through grace. Value these above all the jewels and riches of the whole world. "But you, who are not of the world, but belong in heaven and are bought through My blood for this purpose that you should have another, eternal possession which is ready and ordered for you, — you should not permit your hearts to be taken captive here, but, though you be in an office and station in which you must deal with it, do not hanker after or serve it. On the contrary, strive to get those treasures which are kept for you in heaven. For those are true treasures, which moths and rust cannot approach, and safe against all that may eat and steal. For they are so placed that they always remain whole and fresh, and so secured that no one can dig after them." [60] The treasures of the Christians are even now safely included in the Word of Mercy, and their fulness and eternal enjoyment will be realized in heaven, 1 Pet. 1, 4; 2 Tim. 1,

59) On the authenticity of the doxology, see *Lehre und Wehre*, 1918, 408. 409; *Hom. Mag.*, 1919, Dec., 567. 568.

60) Luther, 7, 539.

12. 14. And therefore their minds and hearts are centered in heaven, upon their greatest treasure, secure for them in the hands of God.

The parable of the eye: V. 22. **The light of the body is the eye; if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light.** V. 23. **But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!** The absurdity and dangerousness of covetousness is here illustrated, probably with reference to the Pharisees, whose attention and affections were divided between temporal and spiritual things, and who therefore became spiritually blind. The eye is the organ of vision and incidentally the seat of expression. To perform its function properly, it should be the light of the body, give light for the body's movement and labor. The candid, open, healthy eye will give this service properly; the bad, diseased eye will cause the whole body to be in darkness, though the person stand in the midst of light. In other words: The light of the body is the eye, because the eye lets light into the body and makes it available to the body. When the eye of the soul is in proper condition, free from the desire to hoard, then true Christian knowledge can control and direct the person unto every good work. But when sordid passions take hold of the soul, Christian knowledge suffers, heart and mind are blinded, judgment is perverted, and nothing but evil results. There is spiritual darkness without a single ray of light, just as the extinguishing of a lamp in a dark room intensifies the darkness greatly.

Warning against Mammon: V. 24. **No man can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will hold to the one and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and Mammon.** It is a general truth, commonly accepted: For a slave to serve two masters is impossible. True, undivided service presupposes love and attachment, or at least a strong interest. He will regard the one with devotion, the other with aversion; he will take the part of the one, or at least put up with him, the other he will disregard. The conclusion: It is impossible to be faithful to God and at the same time be a servant of riches, making an idol of them. Christ does not condemn the possession, but the service of riches. Man can have only one highest good and principle of life. The service of heaven cannot be combined with the earthly inclinations, the two cannot be reconciled. If he chooses filthy lucre as his highest good, the service of God is out of the question, and he loses substantial and eternal blessedness. The disciples of Christ will shun covetousness with all their hearts and give their life's devotion to their God and Savior.

Counsel against worry about food and clothing: V. 25. **Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat? and the body than raiment?** The connection of thought is this: Avarice flows out of distrust of God, and this distrust shows itself in anxious care. Avoid the one, and you are more likely to withstand the other. Incidentally, the warnings here given are more suitable to the circumstances of the disciples, whose concern would oftener be regarding the necessaries of life than the amassing of treasures. Take no thought, have no concern about, do not let it worry you. Food, even that necessary to sustain life, and clothing, even that demanded for warmth, shall not be objects for worry. Care divides and distracts the mind, causing that distrust which goes before denial. The argument of Christ is from the more to the less important: The natural life is more than the food which sustains it; and the body containing this life is more than the clothing which protects it. Can He therefore that gave the greater, the more important, not be trusted to give the less? Solicitous concern for food and clothing, then, not only forgets the Giver of all good gifts, but weakens the members of the body, so that they cannot properly perform the work of the daily calling.

A further consideration for those of little faith: V. 26. **Behold the fowls of the air; for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?** Examples of perfect trust in God who has always provided for them: the birds do even less than that expected of human beings in the matter of providing for the future, Prov. 6, 6; 20, 4. For them there is neither seed-time nor harvest; they have no barns and granaries to store food against the coming of famine. And yet, behold them! Fix your eyes upon them and think who keeps them alive, who cares for them. Their table is always set, sometimes with the choicest of foods, sometimes with just enough to sustain life, but — He feedeth them. If He cares for these humble creatures and provides for them, is there not reason to believe that His children will not want bread?

How unprofitable is worry: V. 27. **Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature?** In whose case will the fact that he worries about the question continually be of any aid in increasing his height, or rather, in lengthening his life? Ps. 39, 5. It is simply impossible for a person, by taking thought of the matter, both to produce the growth that comes from food and to extend the days of his life. Why, then, not leave these matters to Providence? Christ even points to the inanimate creatures as examples of God's loving care: V. 28. **And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they toil not, neither do they spin.** V. 29. **And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.** To worry about clothing to cover one's nakedness must

seem strange in view of the thousand miracles surrounding us. Consider, observe well, take a lesson from the lilies, He says, including in this term all flowers, since those of Palestine are very beautiful. They grow, they become large; and yet they do nothing to provide a suitable dress for themselves; neither heavy nor light work is on their daily program. The situation demands a strong statement, and Jesus deliberately gives it. Solomon, whose riches and luxury were proverbial among the Jews as the climax and pinnacle of gorgeousness, in the very height of his glory and wealth and magnificence, could not be compared, in the splendor of his attire, with one of these flowers. Nothing on earth can equal the rich blending of colors, the velvety texture of the petals of some of the commonest blossoms that are overlooked as weeds by the heedless.

Application of the argument: V. 30. **Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, shall He not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?** The lilies, whose blossoms teach such a great lesson, belong to the grasses; they may even be classed as weeds, if their number and persistence interferes with the tilling of the soil. They belong to the creatures with little value, comparatively speaking. The natives of Palestine, to this day, make use of hay, stubble, and withered herbs to heat their clay ovens, round pots, narrow at the top. These plants of the field, then, which stand so low in the estimation of men that they are used for fuel, are yet so highly esteemed by the Lord that He clothes them in splendid garments, more wonderful than the most gorgeous apparel of Israel's richest king. And children of God should permit themselves to be harassed by anxious care as to the clothing that they need? Such conduct must surely be a sign of little faith.

Christ renews His exhortation against worry: V. 31. **Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed?** V. 32. **(For after all these things do the Gentiles seek.) For your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.** It is in the form of an impassioned peroration that the Lord pleads with His hearers. All the care and worry of providing food and clothing, the continual harping on that one theme, so that it makes up the burden of your conversation, that it is the one subject which engages all your time and energy, is sinful and heathenish. For bread, raiment, wealth, all the gifts which this world has to offer, are eagerly sought as the supreme, the most important things in life, by the heathen. They have no thought beyond the gratification of their bodily desires. As for you: Your Father above knows, He is fully aware of the conditions, He is acquainted with all your needs. His fatherly heart, filled with love toward you, is willing to do what is best for you; so drive all dull care far away from you, lest your worry lead to distrust and your distrust to the worship of Mammon. "That is not sin nor service of Mammon that a person eats and drinks and clothes himself, as the need of life and body demands that he have his food and covering; also not this that he seek and earn his food, but that he worries, that is, that he places his heart's comfort and trust therein. For care is not enclosed in the dress or in the food, but right in the heart; which cannot refrain, it must needs want to cling to it, as it is said: Possessions bring confidence. To take thought, then, means as much as to cling to it with the heart. For what my heart does not dearly love, for that I have no care; and again, that for which I care, my heart must desire." 61)

The care which God demands: V. 33. **But seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.** To seek, earnestly to covet, to put the whole heart to the gaining of, the kingdom of God, is a most necessary care for the disciples of Christ, for the children of God. For this kingdom is not meat and drink, but righteousness, and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost, Rom. 14, 17. To possess this righteousness, which is well-pleasing to God, to be filled with the fruits of this righteousness, to become rich in truly good works, that is a goal worthy of the Christian's ambition. Such a constant seeking after purity of heart and holiness of life will incidentally stifle all care and worry of this life. And the little things of this earthly body and life will then come as a matter of course, the main object of the quest having been secured. They will be cast into our laps as an overplus, as an addition to the great bargain which our seeking has gained. Therefore, once more: V. 34. **Take therefore no thought for the morrow; for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.** Each day brings its own evil, for it is an evil world, and the enemies without and within are ever busy devising schemes to beset the heart with care. These conditions must be met with patient cheerfulness, and each problem taken care of as it comes. To add to the difficulties and troubles of the present day by worrying about what the morrow might bring will not ease the situation confronting you now. To restrict all care to the moment when it begins to nag is to conquer it absolutely. It is only the future that brings anxiety. Put each successive day into the hands of God, and it will bring its own help and deliverance from the love of the heavenly Father, Lam. 3, 23.

Summary. *The Lord gives instructions concerning the giving of alms, and on prayer and fasting, and warns against avarice, covetousness, and care, pointing out, incidentally, the seeking of the kingdom of God as the prime duty of every Christian.*

---

61) Luther, 7, 561.

CHAPTER 7.

Warning against Unauthorized Judging and Admonition to Persevere in Prayer.

Matt. 7, 1—12.

A lesson from the Eighth Commandment: V. 1. **Judge not, that ye be not judged.** V. 2. **For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged; and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.** The Lord's words, in this connection, do not exclude all judging. According to God's own creation and order, those whom He has placed as superiors have the right and duty to watch over those placed in their care and correct any wrong disposition and behavior. The executive and judicial officers of a country or a city, the heads of every household, the teachers in the schools, the officers of the church and the whole congregation, Matt. 18, 15; Gal. 6, 1, the voters in all democratic forms of government, — all these have the power and the duty to exercise judgment in their particular sphere. The word used by the Lord implies personal, unkind, uncharitable, unauthorized, condemnatory judgment. It was and is a common habit, "especially in religious circles of the Pharisaic type." Even an official expression of our opinion may run into a sinful extreme. And so far as the common slandering is concerned, what ignorance, haste, levity, prejudice, vanity, and egotism is often revealed in the sentences it pronounces; what an utter disregard of the law of love! How easily even permissible criticism is entangled with personalities! Therefore the warning: Lest ye be judged in the same manner. Uncharitable, unauthorized judgment will be punished here as well as hereafter. It usually pronounces its own condemnation, Rom. 2, 1. And this condemnation will measure up to the severity of the original transgression: Judgment for judgment; measure for measure. Many an ill report about us may be a just reward for an uncharitable criticism uttered by us, either in thoughtlessness or in spite. An unjust blow will recoil on him who has dealt it.

The proverb of the mote and the beam: V. 3. **And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye?** V. 4. **Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye, and, behold, a beam is in thine own eye?** V. 5. **Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye, and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye.** This example or parable is an excellent comparison to bring out with the proper emphasis the warning against uncharitable judging. The mote, the tiny particle of dust, of wood, or of chaff, in the eye of another, is readily seen and commented upon, with many offers of assistance to remove the disagreeable object. But at the same time, the wooden beam, the log or joist, in one's own eye causes no discomfort, is, in fact, not even noticed. The Lord purposely uses an exaggeration to impress His admonition on the minds of His hearers, and we cannot weaken His picture by substituting "splinter" for "beam."[62] The contrast is essential for the success of His teaching. A petty theft is widely advertised, but commercial dishonesty and grafting is overlooked for reasons of policy; a single unguarded expression is severely blamed, but the continual use of blasphemous epithets goes without a rebuke. And the hypocrisy stands out all the more glaringly on account of the feigned sympathy: Permit me, hold still a minute! — as though the most disinterested, charitable motives were behind the question. In righteous indignation Christ calls such an offender a hypocrite, Ps. 50, 16, a base pretender at sanctification, and bids him above all remove the greater obstruction out of his own eye. After that he may consider, set himself the task, make a careful survey as to the need and possibility of, removing the mote out of the neighbor's eye. Let everyone first watch over the reformation of his own life. Then his tendency toward uncharitable criticism will be reduced considerably, and he will be in better position to be of assistance, kindly and carefully, to a brother that may be guilty of a fault.

An additional counsel: V. 6. **Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you.** Moral criticism is necessary, religious teaching cannot be discarded. But it would be the height of folly and the very contrary of unauthorized judging to unload one's religious beliefs and experiences, tender sentiments, moral convictions, on any one that comes along, no matter in what condition he might be. For Christians especially the sacred doctrines of Christ are the precious pearls on the ring of His mercy. To cast these before dogs and swine, before people to whom nothing is sacred, that blaspheme everything holy, is to expose the most sacred beauty to coarseness. And the result is that those very people are encouraged to profane the holy name of God, to think it a proper subject of blasphemous attacks. And it cannot fail: some of the mud will spatter on him that lacked judgment; he will be responsible for the desecration, and therefore also guilty before God. Note the figure of speech used by the Lord, the second verb referring to the first subject, and the first verb to the second subject.

An admonition to prayer: V. 7. **Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.** V. 8. **For every one that asketh, receiveth; and he that seeketh, findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.**

---

62) Cp. Moulton and Milligan, *Vocabulary*, against Cobern, *The New Archeological Discoveries*, 130.

The Lord's entire sermon had dealt with the righteousness of life as expected from men by God. A great and hard lesson, demanding more strength than any man, even the most earnest Christian, possesses by nature and after conversion. But He from whom all spiritual strength must come is willing to help our infirmities, if we but approach Him with persistent supplication. Jesus piles up the verbs for the sake of emphasis; He builds up a double climax in order to teach men always to pray and not to grow faint, to be importunate in pleading, Luke 18, 1; 11, 5—10. To the mere asking must be added an eager seeking, and this must be supplemented with a persistent knocking. Such methods cannot fail; the promises of God are too plain. God will hear, He will give, He will let us find, He will open unto us. It may not always be at just the time and in just the manner which we think best, but it will, in the end, always prove the best. Only, note the repetition: "Ask," in all humility, but with firm confidence; "seek," with untiring application, but also with painstaking care; "knock," with both earnestness and perseverance. Every one, he says, shall receive if he will but come as a child to its father.

A parable to bring home this truth: V. 9. **Or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone?** V. 10. **Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent?** V. 11. **If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask Him?** He appeals to their love as parents. It is unthinkable that a father who is worthy of the name would substitute a stone for the bread, or a serpent for the fish, which his children ask of him. There is a resemblance, purposely. A father might find it necessary to refuse a child's petition outright, but he surely would not demean himself by mocking him. The grammatical construction is purposely made difficult in order to set the parent over against and yet beside the son. Such a selfish, grudging, mean spirit is considered unnatural even among men, from whom one might, according to the natural depravity of their heart, possibly expect a behavior of that kind. Natural affection is so strong in the average mother and father that it will not let harshness and heartlessness gain the upper hand; they have the knowledge and the common sense to give only good gifts to their children, if they give any at all. The word here used refers not only to the quality of goodness, but also to the measure in which they are given, generously, in larger amount than the children ask. Now he argues from the less important to the more important. That heavenly Father, whose benevolent power and beneficent kindness has been declared to you, that model of goodness and love toward all His children, will surely not do less! In bountiful measure, above all that we ask and think, Eph. 3, 20, He will give good gifts. Surely no vestige of doubt can remain with such an assurance.

The Golden Rule: V. 12. **Therefore, all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them; for this is the Law and the prophets.** Here is a summary which embraces in one short sentence all the admonitions to charity that are found in the entire sermon, all that is laid down in the sacred writings with regard to the behavior of men toward each other. As God's goodness is bountiful toward all men, so shall men pattern their conduct after this example, applying it in all their dealings, brother toward brother, in a full measure of generosity. If this rule were always followed, perfect peace, love, and harmony would obtain in the world. "With these words He closes His teaching, done in these three chapters, and gathers it in a small bundle, in which any one may surely find it, and every one put it into his bosom and keep it well. And it is surely a fine manner of doing which Christ here affects that He uses no other example than ourselves. He thus brings His commandment so near to us that it could not be brought any nearer, that is, into our heart, body, and life and into all our members, that no one need run far after it, but thou thyself art thy Bible, master, doctor, and preacher. Thou hast so many preachers, many a business, ware, tool, and other instrument in thy house and yard. That cries loudly against thee: My friend, deal with me toward thy neighbor as thou wouldest have thy neighbor act toward thee with his possessions. And the best thing in this passage is that He does not say: Other people shall do it to you, but: You shall do it to other people. For every one likes that, when others do good to him. But some say: I would surely also do what I should, if other people would first do so to me. But this verse says thus: Thou shalt begin and be the first one, if thou wilt have other people act thus to thee; and if they will not, yet do thou do it. He that wishes to be pious may not be hindered by other people's example. Thou mayest, then, by thine example, move people to do thee good in return, also those that formerly did evil to thee." (63)

The Conclusion of the Sermon.

Matt. 7, 13—25.

The two ways: V. 13. Enter ye in at the strait gate, for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat; v. 14. because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it. The Lord has finished the sermon proper, but He here adds, as a conclusion, a few warnings and gives a few hints with regard to various offenses in doctrine and life which His disciples are apt to meet with. Two ways are briefly sketched, leading

63) Luther, 7, 609—616.

from the present life to that beyond the grave. And the two ways are contrasted, either one being described by its distinctive marks and by its end. The one way is indeed a common road, no one is excluded from it. But it is narrow, with no room for frivolous liberties on either side. And it finally leads through a strait and narrow gate, which has nothing to commend it outwardly. Only comparatively few find this way. It is so untrodden that it may easily be missed. On the other hand there is a wide, broad, spacious, roomy road, with many factors that invite, that lead forward on that road. And at its end is a wide, welcoming gate. But this way and this gate, with all the qualities that commend them, with all the invitation to indulge in the free, unfettered life of the world, leads to destruction; its end is everlasting condemnation. There is no special warning necessary for the disciples of Christ. They shun that broad, inviting way as the way of the flesh, of the world, and of the devil. But the other way, which in itself offers no alluring promises, on which no noisy, jostling crowd beguiles the tediousness, nevertheless is the Lord's choice. For it leads to life, to the true life, to the only life worth living, to the life everlasting with Him whose way was just as much a narrow pass, a rocky defile, but who has entered into the glory of His Father. Enter in at this gate, is His loving call. Conquer, in His strength, all weakness of the flesh. Overcome through Him all assaults of the world and Satan, no matter in what guise they may appear. The end is worth a thousand battles, Rev. 2, 10; 3, 11.

Warning against false prophets: V. 15. **Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.** This shows one of the ways in which the disciples of Christ may be enticed from the narrow way to heaven, a fact which makes the warning necessary. Beware, take yourselves away from, have nothing to do with, pseudo-prophets, with false teachers. It is foolish even to stop and argue with them. For they are false prophets; they deliberately falsify God's Word, they substitute their own lies and the wisdom of fallible men for the eternal truth. They come, without invitation, without call; they make a practise of going to such people as are members of a church with the deliberate intention of coaxing them away from the truth. They are wise in their own conceit and in the forms of deceit; they come in a very inconspicuous manner, in the garment of innocence and harmlessness. They profess to have a commission from God Himself, and are adepts at pretending gentleness. But their real character will show itself afterward, since they are by inclination and training ravening wolves. Their nature is to devour: they are greedy for money, ambitious for power, but anxious, above all, to destroy the soul. They are murderers of the souls of men.

The principle of testing false teachers and all frauds: V. 16. **Ye shall know them by their fruits: Do men gather grapes of thorns or figs of thistles?** V. 17. **Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit, but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit.** V. 18. **A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit.** A significant point: Not only may the disciples of Christ distinguish these false teachers for themselves, but the Lord expects them to know them thoroughly, to understand them by making a study of their methods and their way of life. Christians are able, they have the sacred duty, to try the spirits, to examine and test the doctrine which is offered to them. They have an infallible rule, the teaching of Christ, the Word of Truth. According to this criterion, this standard, they should judge not only the doctrine, but also the works of the false teachers, which are here called their fruits. Men never think of collecting grapes from thorns or figs from thistles. They are not deceived by false resemblances, just as the botanist will tell at a glance the poisonous variety of berry or mushroom from the good. But even where so much botanical knowledge is not found, the good, the sound, healthy tree is readily distinguished from the unhealthy, the degenerate tree, standing in bad soil, or no longer fruitful on account of age. All these trees and plants bear in accordance with their nature, this test never fails. "As we perfectly know that a good tree will not produce bad fruit, and the bad tree will not, cannot produce good fruit, so we know that the profession of godliness, while the life is ungodly, is imposture, hypocrisy, and deceit." 64)

The end of the impostors: V. 19. **Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down and cast into the fire.** V. 20. **Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.** So far as the test of trees is concerned, men's judgment in their case is so definite and absolute that they do not hesitate to cut down and burn a bad tree, knowing very well that it is beyond all possibility for that tree to bring forth good fruit the next year. But this judgment will strike also those that are guilty of false teaching and living, whose fruits must finally reveal the condition of their hearts. Theirs will be the punishment of the fire of hell. In the mean time the Christians must not forget their duty to test and examine the doctrine and the works of the false teachers, lest they become guilty of laxness in spiritual matters. "No false doctrine or heresy has ever originated without having had this sign which He here indicates, that they have produced other works than those commanded and ordained by God. . . . Let him that wants to judge correctly do as Christ here teaches him, and take their works and fruits, holding them beside God's Word and commandments; then he will soon see how well they agree. . . . Thus thou hast a sure judgment which cannot fail,

64) Clarke, *Commentary*, 5, 97.

as Christ teaches thee to know them by their fruits. For I also have read up about all heretics and sects, and have found that they always made and brought forth something different from that which God commanded and enjoined, the one in this, the other in that article. The one has prohibited eating all things; a second, marriage; a third has condemned all government, every one choosing his own; and I conclude that they all walk on this path." 65)

False discipleship: V. 21. **Not every one that saith unto Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of My Father which is in heaven.** False teachers have been characterized, spurious disciples are here described. Not all of those that make a practise of public confession are in truth confessors. They may try to cover their hypocrisy by publicly acknowledging and professing Jesus as the Lord, thus apparently giving Him divine honor and glory,66) which is implied in this appellation. But a mouth-Christianity can never be a valid substitute for heart-Christianity. The fact that the lips readily form the name of Christ the Lord, make a practise of repeating it, will bring no one into the kingdom of heaven nor let him enter into the blessed communion of those that are one with Christ. Even a mere listening to His teaching with admiration and appreciation will avail nothing. But among those that profess Christ there are also others, such as have received Christ in faith and have by Him been renewed in heart and mind. They receive spiritual power from Him continually and are thus enabled to carry out the will of the heavenly Father in their lives. The performing of the will of God thus becomes the criterion by which the sincerity of their discipleship is tested. Christ calls God "My Father." In His deep humility He is not seeking His own glory. He has the right to bear the name Lord and to demand obedience to His will. But He impresses upon His hearers the sacredness of the revealed will of God; that should find expression in their lives.

Christ's warning of Judgment: V. 22. **Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Thy name, and in Thy name have cast out devils, and in Thy name done many wonderful works?** V. 23. **And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you; depart from Me, ye that work iniquity.** In that day, in the great, dread Day of Judgment, when the thoughts and desires of mind and heart will be revealed, there will be many, a large number, that will make a plea in their behalf. They will point to all kinds of notable deeds that have the appearance of miracles. But whether this be prophecy, or whether it be the casting out of devils, or whether it be some other wonderful work; also whether the miracles were expressly made in His name and ostensibly in His power,—all this will avail them nothing. Though they repeat the phrase "in Thy name," clinging to it as to a forlorn hope that might soften the heart of the Judge, that very expression will prove their undoing. For He, on His part, also has a profession to make. Perhaps they are sincere in thinking that He ought to own them, acknowledge them, but He is of a different opinion. He finds it necessary to expose the hollowness of their confession. Never, during their whole career, while they were deluding themselves and leading others into delusion, while they were using His name in vain in the attempt to promote their gain, has He known them. They have never become His intimates, their hearts were always far from Him, they had no faith. To Him, therefore, all their works prove them to be workers of iniquity, having used His name without right or warrant in carrying out something which He had neither commanded nor sanctioned. Their sentence is brief, but terrible. "Depart from Me," Matt. 25, 41; be separated forever from the salvation, the glory and beauty which intimacy with Me implies. For in blessed union with Christ all is heaven; in separation from Him there is nothing but damnation.

A concluding parable: V. 24. **Therefore, whosoever heareth these sayings of Mine and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock;** v. 25. **and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not, for it was founded upon a rock.** V. 26. **And every one that heareth these sayings of Mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand;** v. 27. **and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell, and great was the fall of it.** A majestic utterance referring to the entire discourse with all its lessons, intended, as they were, to teach wisdom and understanding in the lives of His disciples, as an outflow of the intimacy with Him and the power of faith. Jesus distinguishes only two classes of men, as in other parables and sayings, Matt. 12, 30. He here makes the distinction, the comparison which holds true even in this life, with regard to the foundation which men select for the structure of their faith and life. He bases His statement on the maxim that a proper hearing implies the obedience in life, Jas. 1, 22—25. There is the wise, the prudent, the thoughtful, the long-headed man, that uses his reason properly, that carefully weighs all propositions and selects judiciously what is suited to his purpose. When he builds a house, he lays the foundation firmly in solid ground, if possible, on rocky soil. Note the eloquence of the description, to denote the suddenness and the fury of the enraged elements: rain on the roof, river against the foundation, wind against the walls,

65) Luther, 7, 640. 641.

66) Cobern, *The New Archeological Discoveries*, 127.

— but the house stood, its foundation was laid in the heart of the mighty rock. But there is also the foolish man, whom Christ mentions only in deep sorrow, the man who neglects prudence and common sense. He may build a house whose outward appearance differs in no way from that of the wise man. But he neglects to look to the proper foundation; he chooses a place with loose sand, near the bed of a mountain torrent. And again the elements were unleashed. Down came the vehement rain; down rushed the mighty river; fiercely blew the winds. And in this case they not merely fell upon, like an enemy or a wild beast which may yet be put to flight, but they struck down that house, and the ruin of it was complete. Nothing was left of its proud beauty. Prudent is he that does, that fulfils, the sayings of Christ, and thus lays the foundation of his spiritual life in a rock. He will stand firm in the midst of all assaults of the enemies. Not that his doing, his obedience, make him firm. But his life is rooted in his faith in Christ; from Him he daily gains new strength; by faith he conquers and is more than conqueror, Rom. 8, 37. But foolish is he that hears the words of Christ with his ears only, but presents no evidence of the works that flow out of Christian obedience. He thereby furnishes proof that faith either never gained a foothold in his life or has died out of his heart. Tribulation and temptation will find such a one unprepared. Without faith in Christ he has no hold and will perish most miserably.

The impression made by Christ's sermon: V. 28. **And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at His doctrine.** V. 29. **For He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.** Christ's manner of teaching differed from that of the scribes, for they taught *by* authority only, droning out the traditions and precepts and injunctions of a Law which was, in effect, dead in their own life. Christ spoke *with* authority, His was the authority to teach all men to the end of time. Therefore this power also became evident in His teaching, carrying His hearers along with the force of a conviction greater than that of the polished orator. He spoke the words of eternal truth. Small wonder that the people were filled with surprise and admiration, and that they voiced their astonishment at once. Here was a teacher with a message. Not only were His statements clear, His examples apt, His arguments strong, His presence compelling, but He had a mission as teacher and must be heard: He preached the Word of God as His own.

Summary. *Jesus warns against uncharitable judging, urges perseverance in prayer, points out the safe way to heaven, shows how to distinguish false prophets and guard against false discipleship, and concludes His powerful sermon with an admonition to keep His sayings.*

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT.

The position of the Sermon on the Mount in the New Testament and especially in the teaching of Jesus has engaged the attention not only of commentators and theologians in general, but recently also of social workers of every kind. And a new impetus has been given to the various investigations by the wave of chiliastic literature that has been flooding the country. Some writers have stated, rather mildly, that the Sermon on the Mount exhibits the doctrine of Christ in the first stage of its development, as afterwards it is expounded in a somewhat analogous manner in the Epistle of James. Others, of a bolder turn of mind, have called it the creed of Christianity, the Gospel of the Kingdom, the grand charter of the commonwealth of heaven. One writer has soberly declared: "His primary aim was to deliver men from the effects of wrong beliefs, motives, and habits of living, and to restore them to complete physical, mental, moral, and spiritual health. He endeavored to unite them in the universal fraternity, which He described as the kingdom or reign of God, and thus to develop a perfect social order." 67) Another says: "Tomorrow educators will reread the Sermon on the Mount and seek to make rich the teachings of the Christian religion. . . . To-day all political economy is being rewritten in the length of the Sermon on the Mount. . . . A most impressive political document." 68) Another declares: "When the will of God is done on earth as in heaven, the kingdom of God and of heaven shall have fitly come. Every social problem shall be solved, and all social unrest shall be stilled." 69) Still more elaborately: "In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus gives us a perfectly clear and adequate picture of His conception of an ideal world, . . . a higher conception of the new social order." 70)

The number of such passages from recent books could be multiplied indefinitely. They are all imbued with the millenarian idea, that somehow, some time, probably in connection with the establishment of the much-heralded Millennium on earth, the perfect social order will come into being, sin will be altogether unknown, all men will live in peace and harmony, and Jew and Gentile alike will bow before the throne of Jesus. And all this is supposed to be contained in the Sermon on the Mount.

All this would be perfectly lovely if Jesus had not expressly declared: "My kingdom is not of this world," John 18, 36, if He had not told the Pharisees: "The kingdom of God cometh not with observation," Luke 17, 20, if He had not gently, but firmly rebuked His disciples with their dream of an earthly reign, Acts 1, 6—8. Jesus has briefly, but comprehensively stated the purpose of His coming:

67) Kent, *Life and Teachings of Christ*, 127. 128.

68) Hillis, *Influence of Christ*, 10. 47. 48. 75.

69) Clow, W. M., *Christ in the Social Order*, 82.

70) Strong, J., *The New World Religion*, 98. See also Rauschenbusch, W., *Christianity and the Social Crisis*, 56. 57.

"The Son of Man is come to save that which was lost," Matt. 18, 11. And again: "God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life," John 3, 16. St. Paul emphasizes the fact that "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners," 1 Tim. 1, 15. St. John writes: "The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanseth us from all sin," 1 John 1, 7. These passages represent the distinctive, characteristic, fundamental, essential doctrine of Christianity, without which the Christian religion would sink to the level of paganism. The free salvation of all men through the atoning power of Christ's blood is the one wonderful ray of light in the Bible, which distinguishes this sacred Book of the East from all other religious writings, in which a religion of works and a final half-spiritual, half-temporal kingdom is set before men as the goal of their earthly ambition.

The Sermon on the Mount is an example of the teaching of Christ as distinguished from His preaching. He had two purposes in mind. In the first place, as His sharp comparisons show, He wanted to arouse His hearers, and especially those to whom the epithet "hypocrite" would apply, out of the lethargy of their slovenly righteousness. He wanted to point out to them the utter inadequacy of a literal understanding and of a literal keeping of the externals of the Law. He wanted to show all men, in fact, how far even their best efforts are from a proper and adequate fulfilment of the will of God. An attempt to live up to the injunctions of the Sermon on the Mount will speedily convince even the most optimistic of the inability of man to live up to the spiritual interpretation of the Law. And the second purpose of Christ was to give a lesson in true sanctification to those that have, by His grace, entered into the Kingdom and are desirous of living in accordance with the highest understanding of the will of God. Using the Sermon on the Mount in accordance with these evident purposes will redound to the blessed and lasting benefit of all such as are actually concerned about living as children of the heavenly Father.

CHAPTER 8.

The Healing of the Leper. Matt. 8, 1—4.

V. 1. **When He was come down from the mountain, great multitudes followed Him.** While He was coming down from the mountain, where He had delivered His great sermon, and especially when He had fully descended into the plain, when He had, in fact, reached one of the cities of the neighborhood, Luke 5, 12, the multitudes that had been swarming after Him from near and far, and who were more than ever impressed on account of His teaching, again followed after Him. Jesus at once performed a miracle: V. 2. **And, behold, there came a leper, and worshiped Him, saying, Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean.** The evangelist uses the formula for introducing a narrative, for stimulating interest. A leper came to Him, transgressing, in his eagerness and his earnest desire for help, the rules which had been made with regard to those afflicted with this disease. Leprosy is a particularly malignant contagious (not infectious) sickness, though it is not hereditary. It is wide-spread over the world, but it occurs frequently only in the East and along the shores of the Mediterranean Sea. Several varieties of the disease are recognized, since the germ that causes it has been found. In all cases, however, the sickness follows the same general course. Spots of various colors appear on the body, later on also blisters and tubercles. The face soon assumes a stupid appearance. Ulceration, atrophy, wasting away of the bone sets in, which may cause deep holes and even the loss of entire members. In some fortunate cases, death occurs within a short time, in others the disease lasts for many years. Among the Jews, lepers were considered unclean, Lev. 13, 44—46, had to rend their garments, cover their faces, go without the usual attention to cleanliness, and, upon the approach of people, utter the cry, "Unclean, unclean!" They were obliged to live outside of the camp or city, had a special section of the synagog reserved for them, and anything they touched, or any house into which they entered, was declared unclean. For their cleansing, a very elaborate ceremonial was prescribed in the Jewish law, Lev. 19. No wonder this poor man was so anxious to be healed. He hurries up to Jesus; he throws himself to the ground in the gesture of abject pleading, fully aware of his own unworthiness and of the great superiority of Him of whom he asks the favor; he calls Him Lord, giving Him divine honor as the promised Messiah. His prayer is short, but comprehensive, a model in form and content. "If Thou wilt"; he had no doubt about the power or ability of Christ, but he is not sure as to His willingness. The humility of his faith leaves the decision to Christ. But if there is to be a cleansing by healing, let it be at once. Insistent, yet humble; willing to leave manner and time of the fulfilment of his prayer to the love and mercy of the Lord. "That means, not only to believe right, but also to pray right; as these two are always together: he that has the right faith has the right form of prayer; he that does not believe rightly cannot pray rightly. For with prayer it must first be thus that the heart be certain; God is so merciful and gracious that He will gladly take away our trouble and help us. . . . That the leper here moderates his prayer and says: 'Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean,' is not to be understood as though he had doubts in regard to Christ's goodness and mercy. For faith would be nothing, though he believed that Christ is almighty, could perform, and knows

all things. For that is the living faith which does not doubt: God has the good and gracious will to do what we pray. But it is to be understood thus: Faith does not doubt that God has a good will toward the person, does not begrudge him all that is good for him, but rather desires him to have it. Whether, however, that which faith begs and pleads for is good and useful, of that we have no knowledge; that God alone knows. Therefore faith prays thus that it leaves everything to the gracious will of God, whether it will be conducive to His honor and our need, and does not doubt that God will give it, or, if it is not to be given, that His divine will out of great mercy does not give it, since He sees it is best not given. But for all that the faith in God's gracious will remains certain and sure, whether He grants it or does not grant it." 71)

The miracle: V. 3. **And Jesus put forth His hand, and touched him, saying, I will; be thou clean. And immediately his leprosy was cleansed.** V. 4. **And Jesus saith unto him, See thou tell no man, but go thy way, show thyself to the priest, and offer the gift that Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them.** Jesus was touched with compassion, Mark 1, 41. His sympathy and willingness to help cause Him to stretch forth His hand and touch the leper, an intimate gesture showing complete understanding and begetting confidence. And His almighty "I will" quietly assumed the sovereign authority for a clear demonstration of unlimited power. Not a mere pronouncing clean, as the rationalists will have it, but a miracle: The leprosy that had even now rendered the leper a hideous, misshapen travesty of God's creature disappeared at once, without delay. He was clean. Christ had reasons for avoiding a false popularity at this time. The people were wrought up to such a pitch of excitement on account of His teaching and because of His many miracles that they might have been prompted to hail Him, according to their false understanding of the Messianic kingdom, as their earthly king. This would have excited the hatred of the Jewish leaders too early and caused suspicion and jealousy on the part of the government, all of which would have hindered His ministry. Besides, a premature spreading of the news might reach the ears of the priests before the leper actually presented himself, and their enmity might cause them to refuse a recognition of cleanness. And Jesus wanted to observe the precepts of the official religion, Matt. 3, 15. See to it, look you! He says: a prompt, decisive, though cordial command. Lose no time in unnecessary and useless conversation by the way; hurry is essential. Fulfil the injunctions prescribed in your case, Lev. 14, 10—32; sacrifice the gift which the Law demands, get a clean bill of health from the constituted authorities. This would be a testimony, not only for the legalists, but also for all men. In this way might the former leper spread the news of the miracle properly, as he probably also did, Mark 1, 45.

The Centurion of Capernaum.

Matt. 8, 5—13.

V. 5. And when Jesus was entered into Capernaum, there came unto Him a centurion, beseeching Him, v. 6. and saying, Lord, my servant lieth at home sick of the palsy, grievously tormented. The incident here narrated may have taken place immediately after the cleansing of the leper or after some time, when Jesus had made one of His Galilean journeys. Jesus had entered into Capernaum, the city which He chose for His home during His ministry in that region. Here He comes into contact with a centurion. It is immaterial whether the centurion attended to the matter here related personally, or whether he made use of the good services of others, the latter being the more probable, Luke 7, 1—10. "Therefore he sends a message to Him on account of his servant, whom he loved, a delegation of the most learned and respected in the city. . . . And as they go and present their message in a fine manner that He should come, since the centurion is well worthy of it, and Christ is willing to come and goes with them: when he hears that Christ Himself is coming, he sends other messengers on the way, pleads and wards off: O no! Who am I that He troubles to come Himself? It is sufficient that He but say some word, then I am fully satisfied." 72) It was a centurion with whom Jesus dealt, the captain of one hundred men, very likely the Roman garrison in the city. He was a foreigner, not a member of the Jewish nation or church. But he had learned to know the true God and had undoubtedly studied the Scriptures, thus gaining a knowledge of the coming of the Messiah. In his earnest devotion, he had even built the synagog for the Jews, Luke 7, 4. 5. He had an urgent, pleading message to the Lord for his servant, his house-boy, who had been lying now for some time and thus been reduced to a state of great weakness, ill with a sickness which caused grievous torments, a form of paralysis. The disease of the nerves was, in this case, accompanied with unusual pains, which even hindered the sick man's being carried out on a stretcher.

The offer of Jesus and the centurion's answer: V. 7. **And Jesus saith unto him, I will come and heal him.** V. 8. **The centurion answered and said, Lord, I am not worthy that Thou shouldest come under my roof; but speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed.** Christ's sympathy is aroused, though an actual prayer for help has not been made, a mere statement of need and trouble being sufficient. He expressly declares

71) Luther, 13, 167; 11, 482. 483.

72) Luther, 12, 1184.

His willingness to come and help: Coming I shall heal him. Christ's sovereignty decides sickness and health, death and life. An astonishing answer: I am not worthy, I am not fit; not merely on account of his being a Gentile, but because his humility forbade his receiving the Lord on terms of equality. Cp. Matt. 3, 11. Deprecatingly he speaks of his roof, a mere hut when the Lord is coming. A bare word will suffice. He both acknowledges the necessity of Christ's mercy and his own total unworthiness. A sublime faith: My body-servant will be healed, a conviction born of absolute trust in His almighty and merciful power. On the other hand, unbelief, presumption, ignorance will hinder any kind of communion between God and man.

An argument from his own experience: V. 9. **For I am a man under authority, having soldiers under me; and I say to this man, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it.** No self-important boasting here, but a modesty which makes his argument all the stronger, since it gives to Christ the honor which fitly belongs to Him. The centurion, for his own person, held a subordinate position, he was bound by his oath to the government and by all that this implied. And yet he had enough authority, in his official position, to give commands to his men, and in his station as head of the household, to demand work from his slave. "The argument of the centurion seems to run thus: If I, who am a person subject to the control of others, yet have some so completely subject to myself, that I can say to one, Come, and he cometh; to another, Go, and he goeth; and to my slave, Do this, and he doeth it, how much more, then, canst Thou accomplish whatsoever Thou willest, being subject to no one, and having all things under Thy command." 73) Always there is the reference to the almighty power of Christ's word.

The astonishment of Jesus: V. 10. **When Jesus heard it, He marveled, and said to them that followed, Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel.** V. 11. **And I say unto you, That many shall come from the East and West, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven;** v. 12. **but the children of the Kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.** Any evidence of implicit, trusting faith always affected Jesus very deeply, Matt. 15, 28. He was here filled with great surprise and wonder. Not even in Israel, where such faith, such remarkable trust in His power, ought to be the rule, Rom. 3, 2; 9, 5, had He found such belief. This extraordinary situation causes Him to utter a prophecy concerning the conversion of the Gentiles, which reflected in a very uncomplimentary way upon His own countrymen. In the form of a parable He represents the kingdom of God as a great festival, or feast, where the riches of God's mercy would be dispensed with a full hand. The heathen centurion represents, as it were, the first-fruits of the great multitudes whom the Lord would call from all kindreds, and tongues, and peoples, and nations, to recline at His tables and partake of His gifts, with the patriarchs, the fathers of the faithful of all times. In the mean time, the children of the Kingdom, the sons of those to whom the promises were made, the Jews that were depending upon their earthly relationship to the fathers without their faith, would lose their heritage, because they will not accept Jesus as their Savior. Outer darkness instead of the light of heaven, weeping in a repentance that came too late, gnashing the teeth in impotent rage, that would be their lot. That is, to this day, the expectancy of all unbelievers.

The reward of faith: V. 13. **And Jesus said unto the centurion, Go thy way, and as thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee. And his servant was healed in the self-same hour.** As was the faith, so was the cure. The trust in the power of the word brought the word with power to heal. Christ speaks under great emotion, granting the boon to which the captain's belief clung, bidding his messengers and himself go to witness the fulfilment of his prayer. In the self-same hour, at the identical time, the miracle was performed. Thus faith receives from Christ, to whom it clings, help, comfort, mercy, and every good thing.

Various Miracles of Healing.

Matt. 8, 14—17.

Cure of a fever: V. 14. **And when Jesus was come into Peter's house, He saw his wife's mother laid, and sick of a fever.** V. 15. **And He touched her hand, and the fever left her; and she arose and ministered unto them.** Jesus had, on a certain Sabbath-day, attended the synagog. Returning from there, and coming into the house of Peter, who here bears his name as disciple, Jesus saw a sad condition of affairs, Mark 1, 29—31; Luke 4, 38. 39. Peter's mother-in-law lay bedridden with a fever. Note: Peter had a home at Capernaum, having moved there from Bethsaida, probably on account of the better market for fish, but still more probably because the Lord had chosen this city for His sojourn. And Peter was married; he was not given to a false holiness, a dangerous asceticism, as the Roman Catholic Church demands of its clergy, but made use of his right to have a sister as his wife, 1 Cor. 9, 5. Jesus was touched with sympathy. He rebuked the fever, He took hold of the sick woman's hand to raise her up, and at His miraculous touch the sickness vanished, with all its after-effects. She arose from her bed without a sign of weakness or unsteadiness. She could wait at the table and render all man-

73) Clarke, *Commentary*, 5, 100.

ner of services, singling out, in her gratitude, especially Him to whom she owed her perfect recovery. Any gift received from the Lord should prompt us to the most active individual service.

Events of that Sabbath-evening: V. 16. **When the even was come, they brought unto Him many that were possessed with devils; and He cast out the spirits with His word, and healed all that were sick, v. 17. that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses.** All Galilee was filled with the report concerning Christ, and a steady stream of sick people with their relatives was usually pouring in from every direction. It was after the close of the Sabbath-day, Lev. 23, 32; they need hesitate no longer for fear of transgressing the Law. The fame of the Lord's having cured a demoniac in the morning had spread like wild-fire. The majority of those brought to Him were afflicted with the same terrible disease, that of being possessed of evil spirits. With a word He cast out the demons who, like the entire spirit world, are subject to Him; with tender kindness He healed all the other sicknesses; there was none that could withstand His almighty mercy. The reference of Matthew to the prophecy, Is. 53, 4, is very appropriate. The prophet's reference is to griefs and sorrows, to diseases and pains of the soul, due to sin and its curse. But the evangelist rightly argues: He that bears the greater is master of the smaller. The diseases of man are connected with sin, on the one hand, and with death, on the other. And so our High Priest, touched with the feeling of our infirmities, had sympathy with the results and consequences of sin, knowing its curse, its destructive influence, upon body and soul, Heb. 4, 15; 5, 2. He bare, He took away, our sins and infirmities; they are no longer a curse for the believers.

The Discipleship of Christ. Matt. 8, 18—22.

Preparations for departure: V. 18. **Now when Jesus saw great multitudes about Him, He gave commandment to depart unto the other side.** It was getting late in the evening. Jesus had spent a very busy day teaching and healing. And still great multitudes pressed about Him. He was now on the shore of Lake Gennesaret. To escape the importunity of the crowd and to avoid an outburst of false enthusiasm which might spoil the work of His ministry, John 6, 3. 15, He ordered departure unto the other side. An interruption: V. 19. **And a certain scribe came, and said unto Him, Master, I will follow Thee whithersoever Thou goest.** V. 20. **And Jesus saith unto him, The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay His head.** There were others besides His disciples in His immediate vicinity. One of these, a scribe, plucked up enough courage to speak to Him. A strong testimony for the power of Christ's preaching and of the magnetism of His personality that one of the scribes, who, as a class, were utterly opposed to the ways of Jesus, could be carried away by his enthusiasm and ask to be admitted to the inner circle of the apostles. But it is ignorant presumption to think of being able to follow Christ in any way which he should choose or be obliged to go. He had no conception of the cost of being a disciple of Christ. So the Lord shows him the true meaning of discipleship, what it implies and what it demands. The foxes have dens, where they may rest in safety, the birds of the heaven have roosts, most of them resorting to the same tree night after night for shelter, but the Son of Man, Jesus, in His state of humiliation, is burdened with a poverty, with a homelessness, which to Him is a willing burden, but which might become a galling irritation to one that does not realize what might be demanded of the followers of the lowly Nazarene. Under certain circumstances poverty, privations, persecutions may, by God's permission, be the lot of the Christians. "So all true Christians do: They use their goods, they have nests and dens; but when necessity demands leaving them for the sake of Christ, they do it, and gladly even move from the place where they may lay their head, as on their possession. And they are glad to be foreigners in the world and say: I am a guest upon earth; and again: I am a pilgrim, as were all my fathers." 74)

Another lesson: V. 21. **And another of His disciples said unto Him, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father.** V. 22. **But Jesus said unto him, Follow Me, and let the dead bury their dead.** Here was a man that had belonged to the larger circle of disciples, that had made it a point to remain in the neighborhood of Christ. But his was a vacillating nature, he was still undecided. Jesus called him, Luke 9, 59. Hesitatingly he asks for leave to bury his father, which may have been a mere pretense in order to gain time. Jesus gives him what sounds like a harsh answer. If Christ was here merely quoting a Jewish proverb, His meaning may have been: Let the spiritually dead, those that are dead to the call of the Kingdom, bury the naturally dead. But without such a supposition the words of Christ refer to an Aramaic use of the word "dead," a play on words, meaning to say: Let the dead be taken care of by those whose business it is to inter the earthly remains; do not concern yourself about the mortal shell of your father, that is the business of the undertaker; let your concern be the kingdom of God. The discipleship of Christ is far more important than all duties toward even the nearest relatives; if there is a conflict of interests, there can be but one choice, Matt. 10, 35—39.

---

74) Luther, quoted in Stoeckhardt, *Biblische Geschichte des Neuen Testaments*, 69.

The Storm on the Lake. Matt. 8, 23—27.

V. 23. **And when He was entered into a ship, His disciples followed Him.** V. 24. **And, behold, there arose a great tempest in the sea, insomuch that the ship was covered with the waves. But He was asleep.** The ship had been prepared by the disciples in accordance with previous instructions, and when He now entered, the men that stood nearest to Him, the inner circle of His followers, embarked with Him. Worn out by the intensity of the bodily and mental strain of a hard day's work, Jesus went off to sleep, soothed by the gliding motion of the vessel. All unexpectedly, with great suddenness, there burst down upon the little lake one of the storms which are so dreaded on account of their extreme violence. There was literally an earthquake of the sea, a hurricane with tornado-like force, before which the experienced fishermen were absolutely helpless. The waves lifted up on every side, rising high above the ship, hiding it, breaking over it, gradually filling it with water, whose amount defied all efforts at bailing out. All nature was in an uproar, wind and sea had conspired to destroy both vessel and travelers. Note the contrast: Christ was quietly sleeping, in the midst of all the turmoil, unaffected by an excitement which caused the strongest men to quake with fear. "But, now, natural sleep is the certain indication of a true, natural man. Since, then, the gospel says Christ slept in the ship, the evangelist wants to show us Christ as a real, natural man that has body and soul, and therefore had need of eating, drinking, sleeping, and other natural works that are done without sin, just as we have. In order that we do not fall into the error of the Manichaeans, who believed Christ to be a spirit, not a true man." 75)

The terror of the disciples and Christ's rebuke: V. 25. **And His disciples came to Him and awoke Him, saying, Lord, save us; we perish!** V. 26. **And He saith unto them, Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith? Then He arose and rebuked the winds and the sea, and there was a great calm.** V. 27. **But the men marveled, saying, What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey Him!** Coming to Him, the disciples woke Him. They may have hesitated for some time out of respect for their beloved Teacher. But their fear becomes so great that they are unable to control themselves; it is a cry rather than a report which they utter. In their last extremity He is their one thought. An important point: Christ's first thought is for the faith of the disciples, not for the alleviation of their fear. Why be filled with fear, why so little faith? The rebuke was harsh in tone, purposely, but with a hidden kindness. His own absolute fearlessness should calm their panic. Lack of faith always renders timid; trust in God, in His power and in His help, makes bold. This most important matter having been settled, He arose from His pillow and uttered a second rebuke, directed to the fierce winds, to the tumultuous waves. "Peace, be still!" He bade them, Mark 4, 39. With the sound of His voice an obedient hush fell upon the turbulence of the winds and the waves. The almighty Ruler of the universe had spoken. His human voice, by virtue of the divine power and majesty given to His humanity, controlled the forces of nature, Prov. 30, 4. "But that He rebukes the sea and the wind, and that the sea and the wind are obedient, therewith He proves His almighty deity, that He is a lord over wind and sea. For to be able with one word to quiet the sea and cause the wind to cease, that is not the work of a man; a divine power is necessary to stop the turbulence of the sea with one word. Therefore Christ is not only natural man, but also true God." 76) The effect of this miracle upon the disciples and upon all that afterwards heard of the story, since the sudden quieting of the sea must have been noticed from the shore, was to fill them with amazement: What kind of man and whence is He? They had further evidence for His divinity, as well as for His loving care for those whom He has enrolled as His disciples, whose every fear He is glad to dispel, whose every prayer, even in little faith, finds careful consideration before Him.

Jesus and the Gadarenes. Matt. 8, 28—34.

V. 28. **And when He was come to the other side, into the country of the Gergesenes, there met Him two possessed with devils, coming out of the tombs, exceeding fierce, so that no man might pass by that way.** On the east side of the Sea of Galilee was the territory of the Gadarenes, the Gerasenes, and the Gergesenes, the southern part of Gaulanitis, so named after the chief cities of the region, one of which, Gergesa, was located on the lake shore. Two demoniacs here ran to meet the Lord. As an eye-witness, Matthew states the number, although only one of the sick men was so exceptionally violent that he drew the attention of all, and is therefore mentioned in the other accounts, Mark 1, 23—27; Luke 4, 31—37. Their home was in the limestone caves along the eastern shore, which were also used for tombs. A terrible picture: The naked, filthy, raving maniacs terrorizing the neighborhood, too strong to be bound with ropes or chains, associated with darkness and death, with grave and destruction, a fitting setting for the devil's power, under God's permission.

Their cry and confession: V. 29. **And, behold, they cried out, saying, What have we to do with Thee, Jesus, Thou Son of God? Art Thou come hither to torment us before the time?** Jesus, having come to destroy the works of the devil, to redeem men from his sinister influence, from his destructive power, 1 John 3, 8, immediately commanded the

75) Luther, 13, 1627.

76) Luther, 13, 1628.

evil spirits to leave the men, Luke 8, 29. But they, speaking with the tongue of one of the demoniacs, pleaded with Him not to torment them. Note: The devil knows the man Jesus to be the Son of God; the evil spirits recognize in Him the future Judge; they fear the last judgment with its condemnation. Even now hell is for them a place of torture, excruciating, incessant. But until the last day, and especially during the days preceding the final judgment, they have, in a measure, the power and the might to destroy and to torture God's creatures. But even so they are excluded from blessed communion with God. On the Day of Judgment they will be condemned into the abyss of hell, to be chained there forever with fetters of darkness. So they plead not to be tortured before that time.

The expulsion of the evil spirits: V. 30. **And there was a good way off from them an herd of many swine feeding.** V. 31. **So the devils besought Him, saying, If Thou cast us out, suffer us to go away into the herd of swine.** V. 32. **And He said unto them, Go. And when they were come out, they went into the herd of swine; and, behold, the whole herd of swine ran violently down a steep place into the sea, and perished in the waters.** In the same neighborhood, at some distance from the place where Jesus was standing, and yet within sight. A great herd of swine, animals that were unclean to the Jewish people, by the Old Testament Law. It was a neighborhood in which the heathen element of the population predominated, where the strictness of the Law was no longer recognized. Knowing that their power over these two men was at an end, the evil spirits begged to be permitted to wreak their fiendishness on the swine, always with the purpose of destruction in mind. And having obtained the permission, their advent into the herd deprived the animals of even the instinct of self-preservation. Rushing down the declivity, they were drowned in the sea. The devil is a murderer from the beginning. If God hinders his work of destruction against human beings, he kills dumb animals. But he can do nothing without the permission of God. And this permission is granted sometimes in order to carry out some punishment of God.

The result: V. 33. **And they that kept them fled, and went their ways into the city, and told everything, and what was befallen to the possessed of the devils.** V. 34. **And, behold, the whole city came out to meet Jesus; and when they saw Him, they besought Him that He would depart out of their coasts.** The swineherds fled. The disaster that befell their herds sent them back to the city in haste, superstitious terror filling their hearts. As much as they had seen and the conclusions they had drawn while they were out on the hills: their account may have been fanciful and garbled enough. All those that heard the story and were foot-loose turned out, probably with the idea of taking summary vengeance on whatever person proved guilty of the loss of their swine. They learned the truth. They were awed by the presence of Him whose power over the demons had been demonstrated beyond a doubt. And so their vindictive attitude gave way to a respectful pleading. They besought Him to go away from their coasts, to leave their country. They feared that they might be compelled to sustain still greater damage. The loss of the swine was to them a calamity. And they felt uncomfortable in the presence of the Holy One of God. They much preferred their swine and their sinful life to His pure presence. They repudiated this opportunity for grace.

Summary. *Christ heals a leper, restores the sick servant of the centurion whose faith amazed Him, performs a number of other miracles, gives a lesson in discipleship, stills the tempest, and drives out the devils from two Gadarene demoniacs.*

THE "SON OF MAN."

This expression, which occurs eighty-four times in the New Testament, has almost become a touchstone, or shibboleth, by which the attitude of a theologian toward the person and work of Christ may be characterized. The many commentaries and books on the person of Jesus reflect, in a most remarkable way, the personal faith of the writers.

In the majority of cases, critics have reached the point at which they deny any special significance in the peculiar phrase. The "Son of Man," in their opinion, simply means the ideal man, the original man, the normal human being, the man in whom the entire human history and destiny is realized. It is used, according to the idea of many, merely to express the weakness and humility of Christ, or to designate the second or heavenly man, the Pauline second Adam, the preexistent heavenly type of humanity, the ideal of the beyond. Its definition is said to be simply man, the unprivileged Man: not only no exception to the rule of ordinary human experience in the way of being better off, but rather an exception in the way of being worse off.77)

Other critics there are that earnestly endeavor to give the expression, as found in the gospels, its full value and strength. "In all probability, Jesus chose this particular Old Testament designation of the Messiah, Dan. 7, 13, because, unlike the others, it had not been grossly perverted to foster the carnal expectation of the Jews. Thus our Lord met the morbid and fantastic expectations of His contemporaries — and among them, apparently, those also of the scribe in the text — by laying emphasis on His genuine and true humanity as the Messiah. His great aim was that the people should view Him as true man — in the lowliness of His outward appearance, but also at the

77) *Expositor's Greek Testament*, 1, 142.

same time in His high character, as *the* Son of Man, that is, the ideal man, the second Adam from heaven (1 Cor. 15)." 78)

But these explanations are either entirely beside the mark, or they do not go far enough; they do not cover the full significance of the expression. A mere ideal man is surely not the Lord of the Sabbath, Matt. 12, 8. If any one assumes the right to change the Old Testament institutions according to His will, as Lord in His own right, He must have divine authority. A mere ideal man cannot usurp the exclusive right of God to forgive sins on earth, Matt. 9, 6. To forgive sins is God's prerogative, and if Christ assumes this power, He is arrogating to Himself a divine right, as "the Son of Man." A mere ideal man could not speak of the last days of the world as the days of the Son of Man, Luke 17, 22—30. But it is said of the Son of Man that He will come in the clouds of heaven to hold judgment, with all the majesty of the Father and accompanied by all the holy angels. And a careful comparison of the other passages containing this expression will only serve to strengthen this impression that more than mere humanity, more than mere ideality, is implied.

Jesus is "*the* Son of Man in an extraordinary and singular sense. He evidently intends, with this name, to distinguish two forms of existence, His existence before the beginning of time as the eternal Word of God, and His form of existence in time as Jesus of Nazareth. He confesses and means to convey with this appellation the fact that He, the eternal Son of God, became flesh, entered into a true humanity, for the sake of redeeming mankind. It is a description of His wonderful, mysterious person according to His divine and according to His human nature." "It is not from mere humility that He calls Himself the Son of Man, as though the name Son of God did not pertain to Him in His present state of humiliation, and that He would adopt that title only by and through His exaltation. Indeed not; but He wants to lead to the mystery of His person, that the Son of Man in His humiliation is at the same time the true Son of God, as Peter formerly made confession of Him, Matt. 16, 13. 16. . . . And it behooved such a person also to be the Mediator between God and men. It was necessary that He be a man in order to suffer, and God, in order to transmit to His sufferings an eternal value; a man, in order to humiliate Himself to the earth, and God, to lift us up into heaven; a man, in order to become a substitute for men, in their stead, and God, in order that He might reconcile and satisfy the outraged righteousness of God by a proportional satisfaction; God and man in one person, in order to unite God and men into one spirit." 79)

78) Schaff, *Commentary, Matthew*, 160.

79) *Lehre und Wehre*, 1907, 360—369. Cp. Meyer, *Jesu Muttersprache*, 140—149. Lietzmann, *Der Menschensohn*.

CHAPTER 9.

The Healing of the Palsied Man.

Matt. 9, 1—8.

V. 1. And He entered into a ship, and passed over, and came into His own city. Jesus complied with the request of the Gerasenes to depart out of their neighborhood. Entering into the boat in which He had come over with His disciples, He crossed back to the western side of the Sea of Gennesaret, to the city of Capernaum, where He made His headquarters during His Galilean ministry. No sooner had He arrived there than the fact became known, and multitudes of people began to gather in the house and on the street. It was a day of grace for the whole city: Jesus was teaching, and His power went out to heal the sick, Luke 5, 17. An important incident: V. 2. **And, behold, they brought to Him a man sick of the palsy, lying on a bed; and Jesus, seeing their faith, said unto the sick of the palsy, Son, be of good cheer, thy sins be forgiven thee.** Matthew implies that there was a long process connected with the bringing of the sick man, which is told in detail by the other evangelists: The four friends bearing their burden, the impossibility of making headway through the crowds, the ascent to the flat roof, the uncovering of the tiles. Finally, the paralytic, bedridden and helpless as he was, was deposited in a cleared space before Jesus. A notable point: the Lord looks, above all, for faith. In this case He found their faith, that of the paralytic as well as that of his friends, by virtue of His omniscience. So satisfied was He with the result of His scrutiny that He addresses words of comfort to the sick man. The Savior's intuition read in his eye the need of an assurance involving more than mere bodily recovery. The consolation of the soul was what he aspired for; the despondence, due probably to a bad conscience, must be removed. An infinite tenderness in Christ's words: Take courage, cheer up, son! There is no reason to fear that the heavenly Father and I, His Representative, will condemn. He deals first with the disease of the soul, announcing, with absolute authority, the fact of the forgiveness of sins, applying it to this individual man. As sin is the greatest evil on earth and draws after it all the other evils that flesh is heir to, so forgiveness, pardon, is the greatest good that God can give to man, Ps. 103, 3. "This is the voice of the Gospel: Be of good cheer, live, be preserved. The entire rhetoric of the Gospel is connected with this word: Son, be of good cheer. For it indicates that the heart must be driven to confidence with all arguments and examples that praise God's mercy, against all arguments and examples that tell of God's wrath. . . . That is the kingdom of Christ; who has it thus has it right. There is no work, but only the acknowledgment of all our misfortune and acceptance of all the gifts of God; there is nothing but just consolation;

there these words go without ceasing: Be glad, do not be terrified in thy conscience on account of thy sins, that thou hast not done much good; I will forgive all that. Therefore there is no merit, but all pure donation. That is the Gospel: That demands faith, wherewith thou receive and hold these words, that it be not said in vain. For we have no other defiance with which He bids us boast than that God says: Be in high spirits, be cheerful, for I forgive the sin; boast of My forgiving, of that make a show. Then hast thou cause to boast and to glory, not on account of thy works." 80)

The condemnation of the scribes: V. 3. **And, behold, certain of the scribes said within themselves, This man blasphemeth.** V. 4. **And Jesus, knowing their thoughts, said, Wherefore think ye evil in your hearts?** V. 5. **For whether is easier to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee, or to say, Arise, and walk?** As usual, the enemies of Christ had their representatives in the people surrounding Jesus, to counteract, if possible, the influence of His teaching and of His miracles. It was not a rude interruption which they tried here, but their objection, to the omniscient mind of Christ, was as open as though they had shouted it at the top of their voice. They bring the accusation of blasphemy against the Lord, of an impious assumption of divine rights and powers. They challenge His prerogative, correctly stating that it was God's office to pardon sins, Luke 5, 21. Jesus read their thoughts as He read the mental state of the paralytic. His very searching and knowing of their hearts reproved their wickedness, and to this He adds the spoken rebuke: To what end, with the expectation of what, — what do you propose to accomplish with the evil thoughts that are in your hearts? His question to them: Both being equally easy to say, which takes the greater power and authority, which would prove the stronger argument as to divine omnipotence, the healing of the body or the healing of the soul?

The argument in deed: V. 6. **But that ye may know that the Son of Man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (then saith He to the sick of the palsy,) Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thine house.** V. 7. **And he arose and departed to his house.** Far from admitting a pretension on His part which would amount to a blasphemy, He, the Son of Man, deliberately assumes a divine prerogative also in healing the body. The greater includes the smaller: the right and the authority to pardon sins implies the power and the ability to heal mere bodily ailments. If He had been guilty of blasphemy, He could not have had the authority to cure the sick man by a peremptory command. He, the true human being, is nevertheless not a mere man, but can command the sickness and restore the sick to complete health by a word of His almighty power. The man that had been chained to his cot in utter helplessness could now shoulder this same cot and walk out in the fulness of perfect vitality.

The effect upon the people: V. 8. **But when the multitudes saw it, they marveled, and glorified God, which had given such power unto men.** They were not interested in the scruples of the scribes and Pharisees; the miracle settled the matter so far as they were concerned. They were filled with the fear of amazement and reverence: A Healer in their midst that assumed and exercised divine rights, that manifested an authority over the soul as well as over the body! It may also be that the spirit of Christ was struggling in many of the hearts there present with the unbelief of the scribes. But finally they glorified, they praised God for giving such power to men, not only to the one man, Jesus, but through Him, to men that are His followers. "This power, which hitherto had been enthroned in the Most Holy Place as the prerogative of Jehovah, now stood embodied before them. Hence their joyous expression: He has given it to the Son of Man, and therefore to men." 81) God, through Christ, has given to men the power to forgive sins. It is the peculiar church power, by which the sins of the penitent sinners are remitted to them. "This power all men have that are Christians and are baptized, for therewith they praise Christ and have the word forgiveness in their mouth, that they can and may say when they want to and as often as it is needed: Behold, man, God offers thee His grace, presents to thee all thy sins, be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven, only believe, then it is certain, or what other words one would use. This voice shall not cease among the Christians until the last day: Thy sins are forgiven thee, be full of gladness and comfort! . . . Learn, then, that you can say and instruct others concerning the forgiveness of sins, that God in Baptism, in Absolution, on the pulpit, and in the Sacrament speaks to us, through the servant of the Church and through other Christians; them we shall believe, and we find forgiveness of sins." 82)

The Call of Matthew and His Feast.

Matt. 9, 9—17.

V. 9. **And as Jesus passed forth from thence, He saw a man named Matthew sitting at the receipt of custom. And He saith unto him, Follow Me. And he arose and followed Him.** After Christ had performed the healing of the palsied man, He left the house in order to go down to the seaside, Mark 2, 13. On His way He passed the custom-house of Capernaum, which was in charge of Levi, the son of Alphaeus, who was after this called Matthew, and who proudly records the fact in his account of his call. This toll-house was a busy place, since the caravan road between Egypt and Damascus passed through the

80) Luther, 12, 1920; 11, 1716.

81) Schaff, *Commentary, Matthew*, 167.

82) Luther, 11, 1722; 13, 2442.

city. But at Christ's characteristic invitation Matthew promptly complies. He may have known Jesus before, he could hardly have missed hearing of Him. The call was more than a mere invitation, it was a direct enrolling of the publican among those that stood nearest to the Lord.

The publican feast: V. 10. **And it came to pass, as Jesus sat at meat in the house, behold, many publicans and sinners came and sat down with Him and His disciples.** Matthew, either upon his own initiative or at the suggestion of Jesus, caused a feast to be prepared, Mark 2, 15; Luke 5, 29. But here is a significant fact: publicans and sinners were the guests beside Jesus and His disciples. They were reclining, after the Oriental fashion, on special sofas, resting on pillows; scores, possibly hundreds, were present, all of the lowly, the social outcasts of the city, those whom the Pharisees had excommunicated from the synagogs. The latter took offense: V. 11. **And when the Pharisees saw it, they said unto His disciples, Why eateth your Master with publicans and sinners?** They regarded the whole festival as a scandalous affair, but lacked the courage to address Christ directly on this matter, hoping incidentally thus to alienate the disciples from the Master. Jesus, the Friend of the sinners, is a rock of offense to all self-righteous, proud hearts. They find His behavior savoring of the gutter, and criticize severely such as follow His directions in seeking sinners.

Christ's defense: V. 12. **But when Jesus heard that, He said unto them, They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick.** V. 13. **But go ye and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy and not sacrifice; for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance.** Jesus heard the murmuring and took the faultfinders to task. He quotes a proverb in explanation of His own conduct, implying, at the same time, a criticism of their position. A physician naturally finds his field of activity among the sick, such as feel the need of his services. Those that are well, or deceive themselves into the belief that they are in perfect health, resent the suggestion of a physician in their case. Christ is the true Physician of the soul. He that is spiritually well, that is righteous and perfect, without sin, feels no need of the Savior of sinners. Though there are no just persons in the world that would honestly belong to this class, the great majority claim perfection, a complete righteousness, for themselves. They want nothing of Jesus, the Redeemer. Only the meek and lowly in heart, that feel their sin and the curse of sin, they come to the Friend of sinners and accept healing at His hands. Jesus reminds the Pharisees, who might have felt the inference, of the word of the prophet, Hos. 6, 6. Mercy goes before sacrifice. All service of the lips and sacrifices of the hands, all mere outward worship, all dead orthodoxy, is an abomination before the Lord. A merciful heart manifesting its sympathy in deeds of mercy pleases Him. But the Pharisees of all times have never felt the need of the mercy of God, and therefore have never tasted its sublime sweetness. For that reason they feel no mercy towards their fellow-creatures. All those that are called after the name of Christ must be filled with the enthusiasm of the mission of Jesus.

A question regarding fasting: V. 14. **Then came to Him the disciples of John, saying, Why do we and the Pharisees fast oft, but Thy disciples fast not?** V. 15. **And Jesus said unto them, Can the children of the bride-chamber mourn, as long as the bridegroom is with them? But the days will come when the Bridegroom shall be taken from them, and then shall they fast.** Silenced on one point, the Pharisees attack on another, aided, in this case, by some disciples of John the Baptist. They were all of them rigorous in their asceticism, keeping all the prescribed fasts, as well as many of their own choosing, with painful regularity. They resented the absence of this legal tendency in the circle of disciples about Jesus, even while they felt themselves superior to the Galilean fishermen, and asked for an explanation. Jesus enlightens them: Friends of the Bridegroom, that belong to the inner circle, to the intimates, could not possibly think of fasting and mourning, indulging in all manner of sorrowful performances, while the Bridegroom is yet with them. But when the Bridegroom is taken from them, when Jesus shall fulfil His destiny in His passion and death, there will be a great difference. Then, in those days, they will grieve, John 16, 20 a. In the mean time, their whole life in His companionship was like a continual wedding-feast, with nothing but joy and happiness.

Further parabolic sayings: V. 16. **No man putteth a piece of new cloth unto an old garment; for that which is put in to fill it up taketh from the garment, and the rent is made worse.** V. 17. **Neither do men put new wine into old bottles; else the bottles break, and the wine runneth out, and the bottles perish. But they put new wine into new bottles, and both are preserved.** Just as Christ had emphasized the fitness of things in His apology for the disciples, He here insists upon proper congruity in religion, especially in external forms. To put a patch of unscoured, new and strong, cloth upon an old garment will usually result in disaster, since the patch, being stronger, will tear out at the edges, thus making the rent worse. The piety of the Pharisees, the religion of works which they flaunted before the eyes of the people, on the one hand, and the doctrine of Jesus, the preaching of the free grace of God through His blood, on the other, will never agree. If one insists on wearing his old garment of self-righteousness and works, and then believes it possible to cover an occasional re-

vealing sin with the Gospel, he will find but poor comfort. His heart is still bound up in the old garment, and his miserable subterfuge will only make the incongruity appear the more glaring. It is just as foolish to keep new wine, grape-juice in the early stage of fermentation, in old skins that have lost their elasticity. The result is disastrous: The skins burst, the wine is spilled. But new skins and new wine are perfectly suited to each other. The sweet Gospel of the forgiveness of sins by the mercy of God does not fit into carnal, Pharisaic hearts. If the Gospel is preached to those that believe in works only, its richness is squandered. Such hearts cannot understand or keep it; they only take offense at the preaching of the Gospel, and are lost in spite of the Gospel. Only meek and lowly, believing hearts will accept the Gospel just as it reads, and will be kept by the power of God unto salvation.

The Daughter of Jairus. Matt. 9, 18—26.

V. 18. **While He spake these things unto them, behold, there came a certain ruler and worshiped Him, saying, My daughter is even now dead; but come, and lay Thy hand upon her, and she shall live.** V. 19. **And Jesus arose and followed him, and so did His disciples.** Jesus was still in earnest conversation with the Pharisees and the disciples of John, when there was an interruption. A ruler, or elder, of the synagog at Capernaum, a man of some influence, coming in, threw himself down before the Lord in the attitude of supplication. Matthew here, for the sake of brevity, mentions the cry of the ruler after he had received the actual report of his daughter's death, Mark 5, 35. His faith in the ability of Christ to heal, and even to bring back from death, is absolute. Even now she surely must be dead, but the touch of the great Healer's hand could restore her to life. Jesus, ever full of loving sympathy, ready, for the sake of a soul, to go also to the bedsides, went with the distracted father.

An interlude: (V. 20. **And, behold, a woman which was diseased with an issue of blood twelve years, came behind Him, and touched the hem of His garment.** V. 21. **For she said within herself, If I may but touch His garment, I shall be whole.** V. 22. **But Jesus turned Him about, and when He saw her, He said, Daughter, be of good comfort; thy faith had made thee whole. And the woman was made whole from that hour.**) Another applicant for help, a woman that had a bloody flux, a disagreeable, weakening disease, rendering Levitically unclean, Lev. 15, having spent all her substance in the fruitless quest of health. From behind she came, partly from shame on account of her uncleanness and morbid sensitiveness due to her condition, partly from humility. Only the fringe of His coat she wanted to touch, the outer of the four tassels which Jesus, in accordance with the commandment, Num. 15, 38, wore to remind of the commandments. She had the firm conviction, based on her simple faith in His almighty power, that such a mere touching would suffice to render her whole. There was no cunning and superstition in her action. Only a living, strong faith could have such certainty that a mere touch of the garment's hem would restore to health. She hoped, incidentally, to remain undetected in the dense crowd which was pressing about the Lord, Mark 5, 30—32. But Jesus felt the touch, just as He knew of her presence and her eager desire. He turned around, and seeing her, He added His comforting assurance to the miracle which had even then taken place. All fear must vanish at His kind words, at His cheering tone of voice, in rhythmic cadence. She has entered, by her faith, into the close and honoring relation of a daughter to Him, and that same faith has gained from Him the fulfilment of her wish. She is a healed woman. He sets forth her faith as an example before the people, just as He found it necessary, about this time, to encourage the ruler with the words: Fear not, only believe, Mark 5, 36. "Thus thou seest what faith is and does, when it clings to the person of Christ, namely, such a heart as deems Him its Lord and Savior, the Son of God, through whom God reveals Himself and has promised us His grace, that for His sake and through Him He wants to hear and help us. That is the true spiritual, internal worship, when the heart deals with Christ and calls upon Him, though it speak not a word, and gives Him the right honor, believes Him to be the true Savior, who knows and hears also the secret desires of the heart, and proves His help and power, though He does not at once and externally permit Himself to be felt and handled in such a manner as we think." 83)

At the house of Jairus: V. 23. **And when Jesus came into the ruler's house, and saw the minstrels and the people making a noise,** v. 24. **He said unto them, Give place, for the maid is not dead, but sleepeth. And they laughed Him to scorn.** V. 25. **But when the people were put forth, He went in, and took her by the hand; and the maid arose.** V. 26. **And the fame hereof went abroad into all that land.** Jesus had purposely tarried and spent some time with the woman on the way over to the ruler's house. But now, coming into the house and seeing the flute-players and the noisy crowd of professional mourners which had even then gathered, mainly in the desire to share in the meat and drink which was forthcoming at such occasions, and hearing the confused din which arose from the motley assembly, He sternly bids them: Retire, move away, do not stay here. Not dead is the young girl, but she sleeps. Before Christ she was not in the final power of death, to Him her lifeless form presented only a sleeping maiden. The death of all the faithful is merely

83) Luther, 11, 1857.

a sleep for some little time in the bed of the grave, from which there will be a glorious awakening when God will reunite soul and body. "Thus we also shall learn to look upon our death in the right way that we do not become frightened before it as unbelief does: That it is truly in Christ not a death, but a fine, sweet, short sleep, in which we, delivered from this present misery, from sin and from the true death's trouble and fear, safe and without all care, may rest a short moment as on a couch, until the time comes when He will wake and call us with all His dear children to eternal glory and joys." 84)

The scornful laughter, the derisive jeering of the crowd did not deter the Lord. After the house had been cleared of their distasteful presence, He went into the chamber of death with the parents and with His three favorite disciples, Peter, James, and John, took hold of the little girl's hand, and commanded her to arise. Here a body which had been claimed by death as its own was restored to life with all its manifestations. The maid could arise, she could walk, eat, and drink, perform all the usual acts of a living person. Christ, as the Fountain of life, can bring back to life even such as have submitted to the grim reaper. With His human voice He aroused the child from the sleep of death. Even in the state of humiliation the human nature of Christ is the source and the fountain of life.

Against the wishes of Jesus, who desired no notoriety for Himself, but wanted the parents of the maiden to contemplate the miracle in quiet thankfulness, the fame, the report of this resurrection spread through that entire region. It was a matter unheard of till now that a dead person was raised to life again. Jesus feared enthusiastic demonstrations.

Further Miracles of That Day.

Matt. 9, 27—34.

V. 27. **And when Jesus departed thence, two blind men followed Him, crying and saying, Thou son of David, have mercy on us.** There was no respite for the Lord since His power over diseases was now generally known. Waiting at the door were two unfortunates with an affliction very common in the East, especially in Egypt, Palestine, and Arabia. They were blind from disease. The stories they had heard of the healing power of Jesus and the words which they had had occasion to listen to from His own mouth, had given them the conviction that this man must be the promised Messiah. For while they followed after Him, they cried loudly, calling Him the Son of David, and beseeching Him for help. Note: The opinion was generally held in Judea at that time, that the Messiah should be the Son of David, John 7, 42. Jesus was openly acknowledged as coming from this family, Matt. 12, 23; 15, 22; 20, 30. 31; 21, 9. 15; 22, 41—45. The fact that these blind men thus publicly invoked Him amounted to a distinct profession of the Messiahship of Jesus. For that reason also the pleading cry: Have mercy on us! No grumbling against fate, no demanding of a just alleviation of an unmerited punishment; only mercy they beg.

The healing and its effect: V. 28. **And when He was come into the house, the blind men came to Him; and Jesus saith unto them, Believe ye that I am able to do this? They say unto Him, Yea, Lord.** V. 29. **Then touched He their eyes, saying, According unto your faith, be it unto you.** V. 30. **And their eyes were opened; and Jesus straitly charged them, saying, See that no man know it.** V. 31. **But they, when they were departed, spread abroad His fame in all that country.** Jesus had taken no notice of the cries of the men on the street, either for fear of awakening false expectations, or in order to test their faith. But they were persistent with that importunity which usually conquered Jesus. When He reached His house, His lodgings, they went directly to Him. The Lord has only one question to address to them, whether they have faith in His power to help, to which they assented with a glad Yes, Lord, thus both confessing faith in His ability and giving Him the honor due Him as the Lord of heaven. Then, without further hesitation, overcome by the force of their pleading in faith, He touched their eyes and thus opened and gave sight to them. As was their faith, so was their reward. Faith is the hand which takes what God offers, the spiritual organ of appropriation, the connecting link between our emptiness and God's fulness. It is faith which opens the heart of Jesus and storms the very gates of heaven. But this trusting faith is always an outgrowth of redeeming faith, of the firm reliance in the blood and merits of Jesus the Redeemer. The Lord, in dismissing the men that had thus received His bounty, sternly enjoined them, very emphatically charged them, on pain of His displeasure, not to spread the news abroad, to let no one know of the healing. The danger of a carnal movement, by which the people of Galilee would be roused into rebellion against the Romans, made it necessary for Him to impose silence upon them. But they, believing, probably, that it was only humility that prompted the Lord to make such a demand, and full of joy over the help which they had experienced, were most active in relating their glad news in that entire country, far beyond the boundaries of Capernaum.

The dumb demoniac: V. 32. **As they went out, behold, they brought to Him a dumb man possessed with a devil.** V. 33. **And when the devil was cast out, the dumb spake, and the multitudes marveled, saying, It was never so seen in Israel.** V. 34. **But the Pharisees said, He casteth out devils through the prince of the devils.**

84) Luther, 11, 1865.

Hardly had the men of the last miracle gone from the room, in fact, while they were leaving the house, another sufferer was brought to the great Healer. In this case the evil spirits had blunted the faculty of speech. There was no apparent physical defect, but the devil's power held the tongue and took from the man the ability to speak. No sooner, therefore, was the evil spirit cast out than the dumb could speak in connected discourse. Again the crowd present was filled with wonder, which found its expression in the saying: The like was never seen in Israel. It was unheard of that a man should have such unlimited power, even over demons. Never before, also, had the appearance of the final deliverance been so fully realized. The Messianic revelation was gradually entering into the consciousness of the people. The Pharisees tried to weaken the impression of the miracle by a theory which they had formed: In and through the prince of demons He casts out demons. They insinuate that there is intimate relation and fellowship between Christ and the powers of evil, that He is in league with Satan and can therefore command them at will. Christ purposely ignored the remark in this case, though He might easily have put them to silence, Matt. 12, 24—28.

Continuation of Christ's Teaching and Healing Ministry. Matt. 9, 35—38.

A ministry of the Gospel: V. 35. **And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogs, and preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people.** Another summary of Christ's prophetical work, like chapter 4, 23—25. Repeatedly, without becoming weary, Jesus makes His trips through the Galilean country. The people of the country had full opportunity, not only to know the truth, but to become established in the truth. He visited not only all the cities, but also the villages, teaching in preparation for the acceptance of the message which He brought, preaching the Gospel-news itself, and giving proof of its divine character by the miracles of healing which He performed. The Gospel of the Kingdom He proclaimed, not of a kingdom of this world, neither a temporal principality nor a social reformation, but a communion of believers in union with Him as their Head. "That means to be in the kingdom of heaven, if I am a living member of Christianity, and not only hear the Gospel, but also believe." 85)

85) Luther, 11, 490.

Christ's compassion: V. 36. **But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad as sheep having no shepherd.** V. 37. **Then saith He unto His disciples, The harvest, truly, is plenteous, but the laborers are few.** V. 38. **Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest that He will send forth laborers into His harvest.** Christ's ministry brought Him into the most intimate touch with the people, gave Him the clearest insight into their moral and religious condition. Two pictures were suggested to His mind: A flock of sheep neglected in the desert, and a harvest going to waste for lack of reapers. The people whom He met were faint, overdriven, afflicted, beaten down, exhausted by long, aimless driving, completely worn out and scattered about. They had no faithful shepherds. The Pharisees and scribes vexed, worried their souls with their legal flaying, gave them thousands of precepts regulating the very minutest details of their lives, but neither taught them where to get the strength nor gave them the comfort of the Gospel. Most of the people were in the direst spiritual distress. A pitiful spectacle! But this is to arouse them to action. The harvest of God is always great, since He wants all men to be saved. When the souls have grown weary and surfeited with the husks of human doctrines and traditions of men, they are more apt to feel and realize their need of the Gospel of Jesus, as in the case of many of the Jewish nation. The laborers, that are in full sympathy with the Gospel-teachings, that are willing to work for Christ, are few. At that time only the Lord and here and there a true Israelite were laboring for the Kingdom. There is needed some of Christ's compassion, some of that divine commiseration which moved the heart of Christ; there is needed some of that willingness to work and, if need be, to suffer, which characterized the ministry of Christ; and there is needed, lastly, the force of heaven-storming prayers to the Lord of the harvest, to the great Lord of the Kingdom, that He Himself would thrust out, that He will urge and make willing the hearts of the laborers as He sends them forth to reap the souls for His eternal kingdom.

Summary. *Jesus heals a paralytic, calls Matthew, takes dinner with him, and gives a lesson on humility and fasting, raises the daughter of Jairus, heals the woman with the issue of blood, gives sight to two blind men, drives out a dumb demon, and draws a lesson from His ministry.*

ROMAN GOVERNMENT AND TAX COLLECTION IN PALESTINE.

Rome was the fourth world power to get possession of Palestine and to make the Jews vassals. The latter, while retaining the characteristics of their nationality and laying a greater emphasis than ever on the externals of their religion, had not been an independent nation for any great length of time since the beginning of the Babylonian captivity. Even the reign of the Maccabees proved to be only a last desperate attempt to return to the ancient power and glory. Disrupted by a civil war between the Asmonean Sadducees and the Pharisees, the nation was not in a position to present a united front against an enemy from without. The

Roman general Pompey, who was just then conducting a campaign in Syria, gladly availed himself of the opportunity to interfere. The hatred of the opposing parties made a peaceful settlement of their differences impossible, and so Pompey finally took the city on the 23d of Sivan, a fast-day, in the year 63 B. C. Although he entered the Temple, and even visited the Holy of Holies, he did not interfere with the worship of the Jews, being content with having made them tributary to the power of Rome.

At the beginning of the Christian era the Idumean Herod was king of Judea, which included practically the entire country as it had been in the time of David. After his death, Archelaus became ruler of Idumea, Judea, and Samaria, under the title of ethnarch. In the year 6 A. D., he was banished to Vienne, in the province of Gaul, and his dominions were annexed to the province of Syria. Thus it was that the southern part of Palestine was ruled by governors, among whom were Pontius Pilate, Felix, and Festus. These were under the supervision of the Roman legate for Syria, and they made Caesarea their capital, visiting Jerusalem only occasionally. Herod Antipas became tetrarch of Galilee and Perea. Philip received Batanea, Trachonitis, Auranitis, Gaulanitis, Panias, and Iturea, and resided at Scythopolis, later at Caesarea Philippi. At his death his territories were included in the province of Syria, and in 37 given to Agrippa.

The Romans, in the case of Judea, followed the same policy which they had employed toward their other provinces and tributary countries. They made it a point not to interfere with the religion of a people nor to hinder any religious usages, so long as they did not conflict with the glory of Rome. But the laws of Rome had to be enforced, and Roman garrisons were stationed in the principal cities, that of Jerusalem occupying the tower of Antonia, adjacent to the Temple. The adjustment of religious differences was in the hands of the ecclesiastical authorities, but punishments of a civil and criminal nature were in the hands of the government, including the sentence of death pronounced upon the basis of a religious transgression. The presence of Roman soldiers was always deeply resented by the Jews, and especially by the Pharisees, as an unjustified encroachment upon ancient liberties.

The greatest difficulty, the chief point of contention, between the Jews and the Roman government lay in the question of taxes. The members of the Jewish Church, both in Palestine and in the Diaspora, John 7, 35, felt the obligation of maintaining their elaborate form of worship as a heavy burden. The voluntary contributions, the oblations and offerings, did not afford sufficient revenue for the upkeep of the Temple and for the payment of the many priests and Levites, and so assessments had to be levied upon every member of the Church. The annual Temple-tax imposed upon all those that were numbered was, at the time of Jesus, half a *shekel*, or a double *drachma*, about 60 cents, Matt. 17, 24. 27.

The collection of taxes for the Roman government was in the hands of the equestrian order. The members of this order, in turn, sold the privilege to prominent men in the provinces, who, after figuring a good profit, turned the matter over to the tax-gatherers proper, all of whom were just as anxious to turn a penny to their own account. The result was a system of robbery which left nothing to be desired for thoroughness. Unjust valuation, extortion, blackmail, was the order of the day, and the people had to suffer. The Talmud distinguishes two classes of publicans, the tax-gatherer in general and the custom-house official. The former collected the regular dues, which consisted of ground-, income-, and poll-tax. Here was opportunity for unjust exactions, since the ground-tax amounted to ten and even up to twenty, the income-tax to one per cent. But the cruelty of the system became especially apparent in the case of the custom-house official, for there was tax and duty upon all imports and exports, on all that was bought and sold, bridge-money, road-money, harbor-dues, town-dues, etc. A merchant's journey was rendered anything but pleasant when he had to expect to unload all his pack-animals, open every bale and package, and have his private letters opened.

At the time of Jesus a decree of Caesar had changed the system of tax-gathering somewhat by having the taxes levied by publicans in Judea and paid directly to the government. But this change did little to ease the burden of the people, and only made the publicans more unpopular, as being the direct officials of the heathen power. And it mattered little whether the publican was "great," like Zacchaeus, Luke 19, 2, and employed substitutes, or "small," and stood at the receipt of custom himself, Matt. 9, 9. The publicans, though for the most part members of the Jewish nation and Church, were disqualified from being judges and witnesses, and were quite generally treated as social outcasts, on a level with the open sinners.[86])

86) Schaller, *Book of Books*, 123—127; Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, Book XIV, chap. IV; Edersheim, *Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, 1, 514—519.

CHAPTER 10.

The Commission to the Twelve.

Matt. 10, 1—15.

Laborers for the harvest: V. 1. **And when He had called unto Him His twelve disciples, He gave them power against unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease.** The first part of Christ's Galilean ministry was over. He had spread the Gospel-message by His personal preaching in all parts of the northern country. But the conditions, as He had just told His disciples, demanded at the same time more general and more intensive work. And so He commissioned His twelve disciples, the twelve that were later distinguished by that name, whose relation to the

Lord had been unusually intimate from the first. He had many other disciples or adherents. His Word had not returned void. Most of those that had experienced His healing power had accepted His Gospel and were His true believers. Many of these stayed in their own homes, testifying for the Lord upon occasion. Others, and among them these twelve as the most prominent, accompanied the Lord on all or most of His journeys. The twelve He here called for a special mission. The sum of His charge to them: Power over unclean spirits and power of healing both the severer sicknesses and the infirmities or weaknesses of the people. The authority to heal was especially necessary for the work in Galilee, since the fame of Jesus rested largely upon His miracles, and the populace would naturally demand some proof of their commission, if they claimed to have been sent by Christ.

The apostles enumerated: V. 2. **Now the names of the twelve apostles are these: The first, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew, his brother; James, the son of Zebedee, and John, his brother;** v. 3. **Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas, and Matthew, the publican; James, the son of Alpheus, and Lebbeus, whose surname was Thaddeus;** v. 4. **Simon the Canaanite, and Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed Him.** Apostles they are called as the special witnesses of Christ and as His representatives in extending His Church, Acts 1, 8. 21, sent by Him with extraordinary authority. Note: At the head of the list is Peter, because he was called into actual discipleship first, Matt. 4, 18. His name, Peter, given to him by the Lord Himself, here distinguishes him from the other Simon of the list. Bartholomew is commonly identified with Nathanael, John 1, 46. Matthew expressly adds his epithet "the publican," in modest self-abasement, and yet with a certain pride that Christ's mercy had selected even a tax-gatherer of the lower class as His intimate friend. Simon the Canaanite, or Simon of Cana, was sometimes also called the Zealot, probably with reference to his most marked characteristic. In the last place stands the name of Judas, the traitor. His home town was Kerioth, in Judah, and he was the only non-Galilean disciple. The call of Jesus to this man was just as sincere as that to the other apostles. But Judas, by his own malice and by the temptation of Satan, thrust the mercy of the Lord from him. From petty thieving he fell to the lowest depths possible for a redeemed creature — he betrayed his Savior.

Instructions as to the place to preach: V. 5. **These twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded them, saying, Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not;** v. 6. **but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.** These, twelve in all, known ever after by that designation, Jesus sent away with a definite charge as to the place and sphere of their work. They should stay away from the country of the heathens and from the cities of the Samaritans. With great solemnity, in rhythmic cadence, the emphasis is brought out. The first offer of salvation, by God's intention, was to be made to the Jewish people. As they had been His chosen nation in the Old Testament, so He now confined His own work, through His disciples, chiefly to Israel, though He was not averse to the Gentiles' having occasional crumbs, Matt. 15; John 4. The chief regard of the disciples was to be for the lost sheep of the house of Israel, those that were going astray without their knowledge and intention, having been worried and flayed and deliberately misled by hirelings. Neglected they were and in great danger of final perdition, but probably to be won for salvation by careful and thorough Gospel-work, preaching, not healing, being the more important.

The message itself and the accompanying signs: V. 7. **And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand.** V. 8. **Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils. Freely ye have received, freely give.** While on your missionary journey, preach; preaching the first and foremost duty and necessity. Its subject: The kingdom of the heavens is even now at hand. In the person of the lowly Nazarene, Jesus Christ, all the types and prophecies are fulfilled. He that accepts Him in faith has the Kingdom, is a member of the Kingdom. So perform your work as heralds, from house to house. And wherever it was necessary, they were empowered to confirm the Word with signs following, Mark 16, 20. Not only should ordinary sicknesses yield to their authority, but even the uncleanness of the lepers. Even the power to call the dead back to life and to control evil spirits was entrusted to them. Circumstances may not have required the use of all these miracles in any one city or town, and it is likely that the apostles did not raise any people from the dead before Christ Himself arose from the dead. There is also some probability that, at that time, their faith was not yet strong enough to perform the greatest miracle, Matt. 17, 20. But so far as Christ's commission to them was concerned, they received all the authority necessary to back up their preaching with such works as must be accepted as proof positive for their divine mission. But this power was not to be for hire, not to be sold for money.

Instructions as to dress and baggage: V. 9. **Provide neither gold, nor silver, nor brass in your purses,** v. 10. **nor scrip for your journey, neither two coats, neither shoes, nor yet staves (for the workman is worthy of his meat).** Neither provide nor acquire on your trip; your mission is to be without material reward. Avarice and hoarding would prejudice your work. Money of any kind should not be taken, lest the gift and the benefit of miracles and of the Gospel seem for sale, least

of all gold, not even silver, yea, not a single copper. The girdle of the upper garment was used not only for gathering up the loose mantle, but also for holding the purses or the loose change. In the same way a bag or wallet for provisions was not permitted, nor a second shirt or undergarment, nor traveling shoes, nor heavy staves, all of which would be a hindrance to you on your present journey. You should be like men in great haste, eager to begin and to carry on the great work. "Even the least profit from their office was prohibited; but implying neither a vow of poverty nor of mendicancy, in the popish sense. They were to introduce the great principle that the messengers of the Gospel had claim on daily support and free hospitality." 87) Worthy is the laborer of his maintenance, Mark 6, 8; Luke 9, 3. This is an axiom which contains, in the mouth of Christ, also a deep comfort. The workman that follows the other injunctions of the Lord need have no concern about his food and clothing; He will provide.

The form of approach: V. 11. **And into whatsoever city or town ye shall enter, inquire who in it is worthy, and there abide till ye go thence.** V. 12. **And when ye come into an house, salute it.** This shall be a standing rule; no matter what city or village it may be, the same procedure shall be followed. They shall earnestly, accurately examine and inquire as to the moral worthiness of the probable host, for a wrong choice might seriously harm the work. But when the choice has once been made, abide by the decision. Seek no better fare or more congenial company, lest you be marked as self-seeking men. It is always best to establish a center of activity rather than depend upon a transient and broken activity. There is here also a hint for the idle chatterer, the gadabout, the busybody, that frequents the streets and the company of those that may be able to further his ambition, instead of finding time for prayer and study at home. Such a home, the worthy abiding-place, shall be distinguished by the salutation of peace, as shall all the houses that are open to the servants of the Lord. Such a salutation is not an empty formula, but a blessing in the name of the Lord, granting the blessing of the Lord. He abides where His servant abides.

Reception and rejection: V. 13. **And if the house be worthy, let your peace come upon it; but if it be not worthy, let your peace return to you.** V. 14. **And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear your words: when ye depart out of that house, or city, shake off the dust of your feet.** V. 15. **Verily, I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the Day of Judgment than for that city.** If, after your salutation, the house be worthy of the honor that a servant of the Lord remain there, then your peace, which implies the blessing of the Lord, shall come and rest upon that house. But after all the pains you have taken, your judgment and the information of others may still be at fault; yet your greeting of peace will not have been spoken in vain, rather it shall be returned to you, to bless the speaker coming with the Lord's good will. The unkind treatment, however, shall in no case provoke you. Nevertheless, the mode of action in such a case, when both the house selected for a center of work and the entire community concur in rejecting the Lord's apostles is prescribed. He speaks with great emotion, as the form of the sentence shows. There is an absolute cutting-off reserved for people guilty of such rejection. The symbolical act of shaking off the dust from the feet or shoes to signify utter rejection of the unclean, to be done, not in the spirit of irritation nor of vindictiveness, but in the sorrow which undoubtedly filled the Lord's heart at the thought of such blindness. The vengeance upon such a city will be taken over by the Lord Himself. Even Sodom and Gomorrah, types and examples of the punitive justice of God, would not be so utterly rejected at the final judgment as will be the inhabitants of a city or village that refuse admittance to the servants of Christ and deliberately cast away the offered grace of the Redeemer. So highly Christ values the good tidings, the Gospel-message He commissioned the twelve to preach. Unbelief is the sin of sins.

The Perils of Apostleship. Matt. 10, 16—25.

The basis of the apostles' conduct: V. 16. **Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves; be ye therefore wise as serpents and harmless as doves.** Their attention is called to the importance of His instructions. I send you, emphatic; He, the promised Prophet, makes use of His power in commissioning them as His assistants; in the midst of dangerous circumstances His gracious protection would attend them. Due to the natural depravity of men and the hatred of redemption, their position would be that of sheep surrounded by wolves, — but not in the power of the wolves! Danger might ever be lurking near, and vigilance untiring is demanded. Here nothing but weakness and natural timidity: there nothing but fierceness and rapacity; yet the mission must go on. The situation requires the wisdom, the prudence, the cunning of serpents, Gen. 3, 1; Ps. 58, 5; but, incidentally, the guilelessness, the innocence, the simplicity of doves, Hos. 7, 11. "Though Christ commands His disciples to be harmless as the doves, that is, they should be upright and without bitterness, yet He also admonishes them that they be prudent as the serpents, that is, they should diligently beware of false and deceitful people and be careful, as it is said that serpents in battle with special cunning and art watch and shelter their head." 88)

87) Schaff, *Commentary, Matthew*, 185.

88) Luther, 1, 624.

The enmity of men: V. 17. **But beware of men; for they will deliver you up to the councils, and they will scourge you in their synagogs.** V. 18. **And ye shall be brought before governors and kings for My sake, for a testimony against them and the Gentiles.** Be on your guard against such men as might turn out to be wolves in disguise. Do not, in general, trust yourselves to men, beware of confiding trustfulness, which delivers you into their power, John 2, 24. A cordial aloofness may sound like a paradox, but describes the proper attitude. Upon occasion and with the slightest excuse, the enmity of men, directed in reality against the Word, will find its outlet in persecution of the bearers of the Word. Both the higher tribunals of justice, where the punishment might take a very serious form, and the synagogs, whose assemblies, as lower courts, exercised discipline and inflicted penalties, such as scourging, would be used by the enemies, Acts 22, 19; 2 Cor. 11, 24. In the present instance even the civil courts may be called upon to pronounce judgment against the servants of Christ on all kinds of trumped-up charges. The Lord refers not only to the provincial governors of Palestine, but, by His omniscience, He looks far forward into the future, where He sees His confessors cited to appear before the mightiest rulers of the world. A tribulation, indeed, but also an honor, since it is for His sake, on His account. And theirs will be the glorious opportunity of witnessing for the Master, of declaring His testimony in the midst of such adverse circumstances to the enemies, who, in the earlier period, were Jews, and to the Gentiles, such as the governors and the court officers and attendants would usually be. This testimony would, as always, have the purpose of calling the sinners to repentance and of hardening the deliberately obstinate to their own damnation.

Counsel against anxiety: V. 19. **But when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak, for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak.** V. 20. **For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you.** Since such persecutions, such trials, will come, since that fact is established, make your preparations accordingly, put your heart and mind in a condition which will enable you to stand the ordeal. Anxious, worrying thoughts argue distrust in God, and tend to produce confusion. It is no personal defense which they are undertaking, but that of a cause. Since it is Christ's and God's cause, He will provide a lawyer at the critical hour. Man's speech is at best imperfect, even in matters concerning this world only; how much greater the cause of the eternal Word! Set apologetic speeches, when the veracity and the power of the Gospel are on trial, may have their value. But so far as the apostles were concerned, they could at such times depend implicitly upon inspiration from on high; the Holy Spirit would give them the very words which they were to speak in their defense, Acts 26. And the promise holds true, in a measure, for all times. "Some of the greatest, most inspired utterances have been speeches made by men on trial for religious convictions. A good conscience, tranquillity of spirit, and a sense of the greatness of the issue involved, make human speech at such times touch the sublime." 89)

Persecution in the family circle: V. 21. **And the brother shall deliver up the brother to death, and the father the child; and the children shall rise up against their parents, and cause them to be put to death.** V. 22. **And ye shall be hated of all men for My name's sake. But he that endureth to the end shall be saved.** The indescribable depravity of man's heart, causing such hatred of the purity of the Gospel, severing the closest natural ties, turning the members of the same household into mortal enemies: brother against brother, father against child; actual insurrection of children against parental authority leading to murder; all natural and family affections forgotten. The world as such has always hated the servants of Christ, and the generality of the hatred toward them has in no wise been modified, even though there is a good deal of prating about toleration. In times of unusual stress, even now, hatred of the pure Gospel and its heralds will spread over the earth like an infectious fever and will readily burst forth in persecution at the slightest apparent provocation. But again: It is for His sake, and therefore a privilege rather than a trial. And Christ holds out the promise of a reward of mercy to stimulate a cheerful courage. He that perseveres, that has enduring patience to the end when the deliverance will come (for the trial will be neither momentary nor perpetual), shall find salvation awaiting him, Jas. 1, 12; Rev. 2, 10; 3, 11. 12.

Advice and comfort during persecutions: V. 23. **But when they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another; for verily I say unto you, Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel till the Son of Man be come.** V. 24. **The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord.** V. 25. **It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master and the servant as his lord. If they have called the Master of the house Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them of His household!** There is a far cry from shunning martyrdom to abandoning prudence and inviting the enemies to wreak their vengeance. Self-appointed martyrs often seek self-glory. Where flight during persecution is possible without a denial of truth, without abandoning a flock of souls to the wolf, it should be chosen. It will be in the interest of the cause, if the work is stopped by persecution in one city, to flee to another, where the recep-

89) *Expositor's Greek Testament*, 1, 163.

tion is likely to be different and the cause of Christ thus furthered. Christ here makes a solemn declaration. The "coming of the Son of Man" is a term referring to the founding and propagating of the kingdom of Christ after His glorification, beginning with the Pentecostal miracle. Ye shall not have finished or completed the cities, there will be abundant room for your labors till the time of My entering into glory and the beginning of My work as the almighty Head of My Church, according to My divinity and humanity. The time is short and the work is great. Energy and courage are sorely needed. In the form of a proverb, Jesus adds another comforting admonition. They should not expect to be better off than their Lord and Master, the Head of the Christian household. To endure the same persecutions, to suffer the same injuries, to be heaped with the same maledictions, is their natural as well as their honorable lot. The enemies had gone so far as to apply the epithet Beelzebub, lord of idolatry, prince of devils, to Christ. It would be presumption for His followers to expect less. "When a person accepts the Word of God, the Gospel, let him think nothing else than that he in that hour comes into peril with reference to all his goods, his house, home, farms, and meadows, his wife, children, father, and mother, also his own life. When danger and misfortune then strike him, it will be so much easier for him, since he thinks: I knew very well before that it would happen thus." 90)

Fearless Confession of Christ Demanded.

Matt. 10, 26—36.

V. 26. **Fear them not therefore; for there is nothing covered that shall not be revealed; and hid, that shall not be known.** V. 27. **What I tell you in darkness, that speak ye in light; and what ye hear in the ear, that preach ye upon the housetops.** Have no fear, is the key-note of this section. Do not let fear, which is natural under the circumstances, overpower you, since they that are your enemies and try to harm you, are human beings. Take the risks of your high calling. Two proverbial sayings are offered by Christ in support of His urgent admonition. The covered things will be revealed, the secret things will be made known. The hatred and persecution of the world are often disguised under the form of patriotism and humanity, necessity of unification, etc.; but God will, on the Day of Judgment, set everything in the proper light and render to every man his dues. In the mean time His work must go on. Its beginnings had of necessity been obscure, done, as it were, in darkness. But the disciples are to give it the proper publicity, set it forth in the light before the whole world. In the same way His confidential communications, His private teaching to them, was to be made common property. The learned doctors of the Jews had the custom of delivering their discourses in the synagogs to one of the elders, who then served as an interpreter in giving the people the sum of the dissertation in a popular form. In a similar manner, the work of the apostles should be carried on. The doctrine which they had received from Christ they are to proclaim with a loud voice from the roofs, since those of the Orient were flat and permitted such a use. Even to-day, and to-day perhaps more than ever, the disciples of Christ should make use of all legitimate ways to spread the Gospel-truths as widely as possible, never forgetting, however, that means to attract the people to the Gospel can never be made an end in themselves, lest the chief thing be made a matter of secondary importance. They shall be used to serve the Gospel only.

Further consolation: V. 28. **And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul; but rather fear Him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.** V. 29. **Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? And one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father.** V. 30. **But the very hairs of your head are all numbered.** V. 31. **Fear ye not, therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows.** Why harbor fear? All that the persecuting enemies can destroy or injure is the body, if God should so permit. Only one fear can and should live in the hearts of Christ's disciples, a deep-seated fear, an awe and reverence which fears not the punishment, but stands in holy dread of Him that judges and condemns both soul and body in everlasting destruction. For this is not a mere human tempter, who tries to harm his neighbor's soul by leading him into sin, nor is it Satan, for he has no absolute power over body and soul. It is the great God, the divine Judge Himself. Fear of human enemies implies lack of faith in Him, which may in turn lead to denial and thus to damnation. And again: Why fear? So little is the sparrow valued that one will be sold for one half an *assarion*, less than one cent; so small is the loss of a single hair that it is not even noticed. And yet: Not a single one of the lowest of birds falls to the ground without God's consent; the very individual hairs of our head are numbered. Will He whose care embraces the smallest details of every-day life permit harm to befall those that put their unwavering trust in Him? Will He who gives the assurance that we are preferred above many sparrows permit the enemies to harm our bodies?

The conclusion: V. 32. **Whosoever, therefore, shall confess Me before men, him will I confess also before My Father which is in heaven.** V. 33. **But whosoever shall deny Me before men, him will I also deny before My Father which is in heaven.** A solemn reference to the final judgment. A confession of Christ in word and deed, an

90) Luther, 3, 1079.

open proclamation of the truth and a steadfast defense of the truth, is demanded for every follower of Christ. This is all the more necessary, since we confess by the grace of Christ, and He wants to give every one that believes in Him this grace. In denying Him, therefore, we prove ourselves destitute of all grace and lacking faith entirely. As He will stand by those with an open confession and defense that cheerfully confess Him here, so will He turn from those who by their denial of Him cut themselves off from the grace of God. There is no neutral ground: for every one the choice is only between confession and denial.

The result of such uncompromising demands: **V. 34. Think not that I am come to send peace on earth. I came not to send peace, but a sword. V. 35. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. V. 36. And a man's foes shall be they of his own household.** The same thought as in verse 21. Peace on earth was promised at the birth of Jesus, Luke 2, 14. And peace on earth was earned by the Redeemer, Is. 53, 5; Rom. 5, 1; 2 Cor. 5, 18. 19. But here is where the Lord refers to the second, terrible effect of Gospel-preaching, in the case of those that persistently refuse to accept the redemption through the blood of Jesus, 2 Cor. 2, 16. Christ foresaw this hostile opposition to His message; He knew, also, that the spiritual conflict which would be brought on by carnal enmity would find its expression in actual physical persecution. His disciples should not then imagine, as they were likely to do, that there would now be a reign of earthly quietness and peace, with all the blessings which the word implies. Division, contention, war, sudden, fierce calamities would follow the introduction of the Gospel. There is no more bitter hatred and strife than that due to religious differences. It estranges the closest of friends, it disrupts families, it causes lasting enmity between members of the same household. These features will accompany the propagation of the new religion. To stand firm on the side of Christ demands the utmost fearlessness.

Perfect Consecration to Christ.

Matt. 10, 37—42.

V. 37. He that loveth father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he that loveth son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. V. 38. And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after Me, is not worthy of Me. V. 39. He that findeth his life shall lose it; and he that loseth his life for My sake shall find it. The facts, as just stated by Christ, may, under circumstances, make a very painful choice necessary, that between relatives and truth. In case of dissension in a family, policy and expediency suggest compromises, and this is the form of settlement usually adopted at the present time. Too often this means yielding on the part of the believers amounting to a denial of Jesus. It implies that earthly ties, the love of parents, the affection between brothers and sisters, are stronger, have a firmer hold upon the heart, than the express commands of Jesus. If there is any yielding of principle, of the reading of Scriptures, of praying in private, of attending church services, of resenting blasphemy, then there is an express or implied denial of Christ by one who is not worthy of Him. It is a peremptory demand for preference above all earthly interests. Of course, conscientious confessing of Christ will result in unpleasantness, will lay many a cross on the earnest Christian, just as the Romans forced those that were condemned to the accursed tree to carry their own cross. There is here also a prophetic reference. The Lord by expressions of this kind was preparing His disciples for the fate which was awaiting Him. He suffered all, even death on the cross, in confessing us. Crucifixion, terrible death; but horrible though it be, it means salvation for us. Shall His disciples prove themselves unworthy by refusing to follow after Him on the way of suffering, when a few years' tribulation will bring them eternal joy? The life of a disciple of Christ is not his to use for selfish ends. Jesus uses the word "life" here alternately for the bodily life and for eternal life, the salvation of the soul. He that seeks and apparently finds his life here in this world, in the pursuit of temporal interests, and forgets the care of his soul, will lose the salvation of his soul. But if any one, for the sake of Christ and in staunch confession of Him, loses this earthly life with all it has to offer, he will find more than full and satisfying compensation in the reward of mercy at the hand of his Lord, the glories of eternal life.

A cheering saying: **V. 40. He that receiveth you receiveth Me; and he that receiveth Me receiveth Him that sent Me. V. 41. He that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward; and he that receiveth a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward. V. 42. And whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only, in the name of a disciple, verily, I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward.** The apostles, the messengers of Christ, are His representatives. The treatment accorded them is, in them, given to Christ, and thus to God Himself, for the Master and God are one. But He makes the statement more general. He who receives, shows any kindness to, a prophet, one commissioned by God to teach the truth of eternal life, always keeping that fact in mind, will receive the reward of the prophet from God. The same holds true of him that shows a similar favor to any Christian brother, to any of the righteous. He also shall have a reward of mercy. And were it, under circumstances, only so much as a drink of cold

water, as a welcome boon to a thirsty traveler, to refresh a brother, a fellow-disciple, or another sufferer, Christ affirms with great emphasis that such a person will not be without his reward. Christ speaks with great emotion, it is a question which affects Him very deeply, since the men whom He is sending out are His own messengers, who shall be consecrated wholly to Him. Any attention which may aid them in doing the great work of proclaiming the Gospel more cheerfully not only meets with His approval, but will, in the end, at least on the great day of reckoning, find such acknowledgment as will fully repay the kindness, and with thousandfold interest.

Summary. *Christ commissions twelve of His disciples as apostles by transmitting to them miraculous powers, by giving them instructions as to dress, equipment, content of preaching, manner of entry, reception, and rejection of the Gospel, and demanding perfect consecration to Him.*

MIRACLES.

The simple belief in the miracles of the Bible which characterized the early centuries of the Christian Church, and which, during the Middle Ages, was, by false analogy, expanded into a credulousness that placed the so-called acts of the saints, spurious inventions of a superstitious age, on a level with the great deeds of God, has long since been declared impossible under modern conditions. Beginning about three centuries ago, the enemies of the Bible have been increasingly active, until at the present time, both without and within the Church, the miraculous element in the Bible is being discarded.

The objections to the Bible account of miracles and therefore to the miracles themselves may be divided into two classes, the radical and the conservative. The first class denies the possibility of miracles outright, without excuse or apology. It has been stated that miracles are violations of the laws of nature, although the statement concedes the existence of a law-maker whose right to suspend laws as well as to make them should be unquestioned. It is declared that miracles are excluded by the uniformity of nature, although experience itself is alterable and indefinite. The critics have said that the human mind is turning away from miracles, that the whole body of modern sciences yields the immense result that there is no supernatural. The miraculous stories are said to be the creations of a credulous and superstitious age. It is argued that it requires no mental effort to cut out of the New Testament the miraculous element. So-called scholars "have examined, in the scientific spirit, our Bible, and at every step they have found the record of miracles mythical or legendary, always incredible as fact. . . . They believe that miracles do not occur, that they never have occurred, that they never will occur. . . . The miraculous element, so it is more and more widely held, is the constant and spurious accompaniment, in ancient times, of every great religious movement." 91) One critic asks, with reference to the resurrection of Christ: "Is the testimony sufficient to show that a man thoroughly dead . . . came back to life, passed through closed doors, and ascended into the sky?" And he adds: "I cannot speak for others, but most certainly I cannot believe such monstrous facts on such evidence." 92)

The conservative class of critics desires to save the Bible, such remnants as they still concede to be true, by arguing that miracles need not be believed, that they are not necessary for the truth of Scriptures and of the Christian faith. Most of the Old Testament miracles are explained away by declaring that they are mere poetical ornamentation and have no fundamental connection with the story. We might possess, they say, the miracles of the Lord without possessing the Lord Himself; does it not follow that we might lose the miracles of the Lord and still retain Him? It is frankly stated that the apologist of the present time has an interest in minimizing the miraculousness of miracles, and making them appear as natural as possible. The present temper of the religious public would seem to be to naturalize not only miracles, but the whole spiritual world.93)

In view of these facts, it is essential, first of all, to know what a miracle is. The following definition is generally accepted: "A miracle is an event making known to the senses the presence of a personal power above the physical and human plane, working towards a moral end." Under this explanation, which includes miracles, signs, and wonders, we may divide them into three classes. There are the miracles of the constant revelation of God in nature and history, the many evidences of supernatural intervention. There are the miracles or occurrences within the ordinary course of nature, which, nevertheless, human strength and wisdom cannot accomplish without the creative and providential power of God, including all the physiological changes within living organisms due to life. There are the miracles or phenomena outside of nature's course and known laws, brought about by a deliberate suspension of the physical order of the universe, including both the miracles of Scripture and the many cases of supernatural preservation.

To deny the existence of miracles in nature about us is to deny the evidence of all the senses and the results of centuries of research. And to deny the miracles of Scripture is to deny the veracity of the entire Bible-account, for it is impossible to divorce the miraculous from the Christian religion, since all true religion is a miracle. That the Old Testament contains but few miracle stories, and that these are confined to Exodus and the lives of Elisha and Elijah, as has been stated, is so manifestly untrue that a reference to the Bible is sufficient as refutation. To separate the miraculous element from the Gospel-accounts, is to take away the essence of the Gospel-narrative. The miracles of Jesus were seals, credentials, because they were signs,

91) Gordon, G. A., *Religion and Miracle*, 23. 45.

92) Parker, quoted in Bruce, *The Miraculous Element in the Gospels*, 21.

93) Bruce, l. c., 43. 44.

essential features, of His mission. If we remove all references to miracles, the gospels lie before us in ruins.

As for the necessity of miracles, the fact that the Lord found them so ought to be sufficient warrant for their happening. The Gospel arose from witnessing miracles and is a record and explanation of these facts. If the resurrection of Jesus had been a delusion, it would have shared the fate of all delusions in being short-lived. And all the other miracles are credible, because they are associated with the miracle of the resurrection. The Christian religion was introduced into the midst of its enemies by means of the miraculous. Thus the miracles are the sign and seal of divine approbation. God would not have sanctioned such a series if they had been falsehoods. And no magicians could have performed them. The miracles were made in defense of a religion of the most perfect righteousness and universal truth, to stand forever in evidence of the unblemished beauty of Christ's moral character and of the divine call of His disciples. It is sufficient for us to know that He thereby revealed His glory, John 1, 14; 2, 11, and that the miracles of the New Testament were recorded that we might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing we might have life through His name, John 20, 31.94)

94) Cp. Lindberg, C. E., *Apologetics*, 80—83. 165; Jefferson, C. E., *Things Fundamental*, Chap. VIII; Garvie, A. E., *A Handbook of Apologetics*, Chap. III; Whately, R., *Introductory Lessons on Morals and Christian Evidences*, Lesson V—VIII; Mullins, E. Y., *Why Is Christianity True?* Chap. XII; Benson, Chr., *On Evidences of Christianity*, Disc. VIII; Brace, C. L., *Gesta Christi*.

CHAPTER 11.

John the Baptist's Deputation to Jesus.

Matt. 11, 1—6.

Jesus returns to His prophetical work: V. 1. **And it came to pass, when Jesus had made an end of commanding His twelve disciples, He departed thence to teach and to preach in their cities.** The Lord had commissioned the twelve apostles, giving them complete instructions as to every part of their ministry. But while they were engaged in this important work, Luke 9, 6, Jesus Himself was not idle. When He had ceased giving His orders, He went away from that place, most likely to some place of retirement, where He had had the opportunity of being undisturbed with His disciples, and began a new preaching and teaching tour among the towns of Galilee, accompanied, as before, by temporary and permanent followers, the Twelve apparently returning to Him from time to time.

John's second attempt to lead his disciples to Christ: V. 2. **Now when John had heard in the prison the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples,** v. 3. **and said unto Him, Art Thou He that should come, or do we look for another?** When John, in his capacity as herald of Christ, had pointed Him out to his disciples the first time, two of those that heard him speak, followed Jesus, John 1, 37. Upon a later occasion, John again bore witness of Christ, John 3, 27—36, which might have been taken as sufficient invitation to all that heard him to become His disciples. In the mean time, John had been imprisoned in the fortress Machaerus, in southern Perea, near the boundary of Moabitis, which, after Jerusalem, was the strongest fortress of the Jews, chapter 14, 3. He had now been in prison for some time, but seems to have received the attention and the services of his disciples as before. These men had as yet no full understanding of their master's message, but looked upon Jesus and His work with rather jealous and disapproving eyes, Matt. 9, 14; John 3, 28; Luke 7, 18. They brought to John an account of Christ's work, of His preaching and its effect, of His miracles of healing and the astonishment of the people. John himself, filled with the Holy Ghost from his birth, having been a witness of the revelation of God and being thoroughly convinced of Christ's Messiahship, Luke 3, 15; John 1, 15. 26. 33; 3, 28, had no doubts concerning Christ and His mission. But the few disciples that were still clinging to him showed no inclination to leave him and follow the greater Teacher. Therefore he sent them as a delegation with a definitely worded question: Art Thou the Coming One, or shall we expect another? The reference was clear to every one that knew the Old Testament, Ps. 40, 7, and was intended to open the eyes of the questioners. "It is certain that John proposes the question for the sake of his disciples; for they did not yet deem Christ to be He whom they should believe Him to be. And John had not come to draw disciples and the people to himself, but to prepare the way for Christ and bring all men to Christ, making them subject to Him. . . . But when Jesus began to perform miracles and was widely spoken of, then John thought he would dismiss his disciples from him and bring them to Christ, in order that they might not after his death organize a hereditary sect and become Johannites, but all cling to Christ and become Christians; and he sent them that they might learn, not henceforth from his testimony only, but from Christ's words and works themselves, that He was the right man of whom John had spoken." 95)

The reply of Jesus: V. 4. **Jesus answered and said unto them, Go and show John again those things which ye do hear and see:** v. 5. **The blind receive their sight, and**

95) Luther, 11, 74. 75; 12, 1019.

the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the Gospel preached to them. V. 6. And blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in Me. Jesus shows a tactful kindness in dealing with the questioners: No sharp rebuke for their tardiness in acknowledging Him, no dogmatic reply to cause resentment. He appeals to their and their master's knowledge of the Old Testament prophecy concerning the characteristic work of the Messiah. They could believe the evidence of their eyes and ears: The blind were receiving sight, the lame were cheerfully walking about, the deaf were enabled to hear, the dead were being awakened, the poor were being gospeled, were receiving the glad message of their salvation through the preaching of Jesus, Is. 35, 4—6; 61, 1. 2; Ezek. 36 and 37. This was literally true and was being demonstrated before the people from day to day. But it was true also in the spiritual sense, as becoming the spiritual kingdom of the Messiah: The blind were having the eyes of their understanding opened, Eph. 1, 18. 19; the limping and halting were taking certain steps with their feet, Heb. 12, 12. 13; those infected with the uncleanness of sin and every spiritual evil felt the healing power of the Gospel, Acts 15, 8; 1 John 1, 9; those whose ears had been stopped up by the traditions of men were being healed of this spiritual malady, Matt. 13, 16; the dead in trespasses and sins were realizing the fulness of life, Eph. 2, 1. 5; Col. 2, 13. And all this is summarized in the last sentence. Note: The disciples of Christ are recruited mainly from the poor and weak and base in this world, 1 Cor. 1, 26—29. But their most indispensable quality is poverty of the soul, that they despair of all their own riches in spiritual matters and rely entirely upon the free grace and the unsearchable riches of Christ, Rev. 3, 17; 2, 9; Eph. 3, 8. "To the poor is proclaimed the divine promise of all grace and comfort, offered and brought forward in Christ and through Christ, that whosoever believes shall have all sins forgiven, the law fulfilled, his conscience delivered, and finally have eternal life donated to him. What happier news may a poor, wretched heart and afflicted conscience hear? How could a heart become more defiant and courageous than by such comforting, rich words and promises? Sin, death, hell, world, and devil, and all evil is despised when a poor heart receives and believes such comfort of divine promise; to make the blind see and to raise the dead is rather a simple thing beside preaching the Gospel to the poor, therefore He places it last, as the greatest and best of all these works." 96) There is a distinct warning in Christ's final sentence, against taking offense in Him and His work, for him that expected a temporal kingdom as well as for him that was not satisfied with His patience, tolerance, gentleness, and sympathy, as shown in His words and deeds. "Natural man said: Should this be the Christ of whom the Scripture speaks? Should this be He whose shoes John did not think himself worthy to unlace, since I hardly deem Him worthy of wiping my shoes? Truly it is a great mercy not to take offense in Christ; and there is no other counsel nor help here but that one look upon the works and compare these with Scripture; otherwise it is impossible to hinder the offense. The form, the appearance, the behavior are all too lowly and contemptible." 97)

Christ's Testimony Concerning John.

Matt. 11, 7—19.

V. 7. And as they departed, Jesus began to say unto the multitudes concerning John, What went ye out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken with the wind? V. 8. But what went ye out for to see? A man clothed in soft raiment? Behold, they that wear soft clothing are in kings' houses. V. 9. But what went ye out for to see? A prophet? Yea, I say unto you, and more than a prophet. V. 10. For this is he of whom it is written, Behold, I send My messenger before Thy face, which shall prepare Thy way before Thee. The purpose of this instruction was not to restore the authority of John the Baptist, which he himself is supposed to have endangered by his embassy to Christ, but to convince the people and especially the scribes and Pharisees of their inconsistency in accepting John the Baptist as a divinely appointed preacher and at the same time rejecting Christ, to whom he had always pointed. An important point: The excellencies of John's character as herald should even now serve to make his message emphatic. For John had not been a reed shaken by the wind, after the manner of preachers that temper the truth to the sensitive fastidiousness of fashionable hearers, 2 Tim. 4, 3, whom Luther calls reed-preachers, that do not risk life, honor, favor, but are guided by the demands of the people. Neither was John clothed in soft raiment, he did not use his influence, as he might easily have done, in his own interest, for his own benefit. That is the privilege of those that live in kings' houses. In their case it is not objectionable, their station may even be said to demand it. But refinement, luxury, a life of ease is not the object of the true servant of God, he is not accustomed to wear such fine garments. But if your answer, speaking seriously, is that the object of your quest was a prophet, then you were right. For John is a prophet and more. All the Old Testament prophets pointed far into the future and sang of a Messiah whose coming was still afar off. But John was the herald of One who was standing in the midst of the people, in regard to whose person he could bear witness. He was

96) Luther, 11, 85; 12, 1026.

97) Luther, 11, 88.

the second great Elijah, whose life-work consisted in preparing the way for the Lord, Mal. 3, 1; he was the angel, whose message was to make ready the hearts of men for the Savior.

The application of these truths: V. 11. **Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist; notwithstanding, he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.** In solemn terms Christ gives His own valuation of the worth of John the Baptist. Not only has no greater prophet than John arisen, but among all mankind there is none that approaches him in capacity to render effective service to the kingdom of God. And yet, "he who is comparatively less in the kingdom of heaven, according to the standard of that kingdom, or who occupies a lower place in it, is greater than John, in respect of the development of his faith and spiritual life." 98) Every lowly disciple of the new dispensation is greater than John the Baptist. For John did not see the day of Christ; his career came to an end before Jesus entered into His glory. And so the children of the present covenant that have the entire fulfilment of the prophecy, Christ crucified and resurrected, before their eyes, have a still more perfect revelation and a more powerful light than John.

The conclusion: V. 12. **And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force.** V. 13. **For all the prophets and the Law prophesied until John.** V. 14. **And if ye will receive it, this is Elias which was for to come.** V. 15. **He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.** Since the time that John preached his message of preparation, it is possible to get possession of the kingdom of heaven; yea, and the violent actually take hold of it with a stormy hand, with a sure grip. The whole movement was a convincing argument for the earnestness and power of John's message. "The tax-gatherers and heathens, whom the scribes and Pharisees think have no right to the kingdom of the Messiah, filled with holy zeal and earnestness, seize at once the proffered mercy of the Gospel, and so take the kingdom as by force from those learned doctors who claimed for themselves the chiefest places in that kingdom." 99) The fact that the new era has actually begun with John the Baptist is set forth once more. The prophecy preached of a kingdom which was to come, John's preaching referred to a kingdom realized in the coming of Jesus. Here was no more prophecy, but fulfilment: The Christ now stood revealed, all predictions and types are found in the life of Jesus, Luke 16, 16. Up till John the Law ruled; he stands on the threshold between the old and the new. Since John the Gospel is in power; he is the antitype of Elijah. This fact may seem rather hard to understand, but they should make an attempt, nevertheless, to receive it. For it is a truth demanding intelligent and attentive ears, such as are ready to learn and to believe as well as to hear.

An earnest censure for the Jews: V. 16. **But whereunto shall I liken this generation? It is like unto children sitting in the markets and calling unto their fellows,** v. 17. **and saying, We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced; we have mourned unto you, and ye have not lamented.** With whom shall I compare this race, especially the Pharisees and those people that follow their leadership, that permit themselves to be influenced by their mode of thinking? Jesus points to the capricious, wilful children of the streets and the market-place, whose selfishness prevents their entering into the spirit of any game with proper energy. If the others play on the flute, they refuse to be merry; if the others tried to please them by imitating the mourning wail of funeral dirges, they would not beat their breasts nor show signs of mourning. The irony with which Christ describes the characteristic spoil-sport is brought out still more strongly in the original language which He used, where it includes a play on the words "danced" and "lamented."

The direct application: V. 18. **For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, He hath a devil.** V. 19. **The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, Behold a man gluttonous, and a wine-bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners. But wisdom is justified of her children.** The proof for the accusation of childishness. When John the Baptist led an austere life, not eating nor drinking, confining his food to the articles most necessary to sustain life, the suspicion was raised that he must surely be mad. The Pharisee loved to play at fasting and act the rôle of an abstemious holy person, but he could not endure the earnest, sincere preacher. The contrast is very strong in the language of Christ: Came John neither eating nor drinking, — Came the Son of Man eating and drinking. Jesus, in His outward behavior, purposely did not distinguish Himself from ordinary men. He neither advocated nor practised false asceticism, works for mere show before men. And the result: In horrified outrage they point the finger of scorn at Him. What a glutton, what a wine-bibber, what a toper! The criticism is harsh, unjust, childish, but in total harmony with the character of the Pharisees. "They play at religion; with all their seeming earnestness in reality triflers. They are also fickle, fastidious, given to peevish fault-finding, easily offended. These are recognizable features of the Pharisees. They were great zealots and precisians, yet not in earnest, rather haters of earnestness, as seen in different ways in John and Jesus. They were hard to please: equally dissatisfied with John and with Jesus; satisfied with nothing but their own

98) Schaff, *Commentary, Matthew,* 206.
99) Clarke, *Commentary,* 5, 129.

artificial formalism." 100) This perverse generation has its representatives on earth even today. The world wants nothing either of John or of Jesus. The preaching of the Law, of repentance, hurts their fine sensibilities, but the Gospel of free grace and mercy in Christ Jesus is still less to their liking. The comfort of Christ under such circumstances is that wisdom is justified of her children, of her works, or fruits. This proverb, as it stands, may mean: Christ, the personal Wisdom, Prov. 8 and 9, was obliged to justify Himself against the judicial verdict of those who should be His children, but refused to accept Him; or: The wisdom of God, present in the preaching of John, and embodied in the person of Jesus, was justified, acknowledged, given its right by the children of wisdom, who accepted its teachings. Thus the heavenly Wisdom always finds some disciples and children that receive Him gladly and are, in turn, instructed in the way of salvation by grace.

The Woe upon the Galilean Cities.
Matt. 11, 20—24.

V. 20. **Then began He to upbraid the cities wherein most of His mighty works were done, because they repented not.** The historical occasion upon which Jesus said these words is not known. He may have used the same words here, in connection with His censure of the Pharisees, and also in His instructions to the seventy disciples, Luke 10, 13—15. In order to avoid useless difficulties, it is a simple matter to remember that Jesus more than once found need and occasion to say the same things twice and oftener. He found Himself here obliged to objurgate, earnestly to scold the Galilean cities whose inhabitants had seen so many evidences of His divine power, in whose midst the majority of His signs and wonders in the northern country had been performed. They had marveled, they had been filled with astonishment, with amazement, they had praised the manifest glory of God, they had proclaimed Him a wonder, they had eagerly sought His help for their diseases, and welcomed Him as the Savior of the body. But — they had not repented, there was no change of mind and heart. They were just as far from the kingdom of God as they had been before the coming of Christ.

The curse upon Chorazin and Bethsaida: V. 21. **Woe unto thee, Chorazin! Woe unto thee, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes.** V. 22. **But I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the Day of Judgment than for you.** It is not a mere personal opinion which Christ here utters, but a judgment which is fully equivalent to a curse. They had rejected Him and His Gospel, and so He is compelled to pronounce sentence upon them: Woe, judgment, condemnation! Chorazin was a town on the western side, on the road from Capernaum to Tyre, not far from the seashore. Bethsaida was on the other side of Capernaum, on the lake, Mark 6, 45; 8, 22. Tyre and Sidon were heathen cities, and had often been the subject of prophetic curses, Is. 23, 1; Ezek. 26, 2. 3; 27, 2; Zech. 9, 2; Jer. 25, 22; 27, 3; Joel 3, 9. They are taken as representatives of the entire heathen world in their opposition to the true God, in their moral corruptness and idolatry. The contrast is purposely glaring: The Galilean cities signally blessed both temporally and spiritually from olden times, their inhabitants members of the chosen people of God, now distinguished more than ever by the sojourn of Christ in their midst with the revelation of His glory, with opportunities such as no other cities ever had; and the heathen cities that were visited only occasionally by a prophet of the Lord. The greater the grace, the greater the responsibility. On the Day of Judgment all these things will be taken into account and sentence rendered accordingly, Luke 12, 47. 48; 13, 34. 35. Only the deepest and most sincere repentance, in black sackcloth, with ashes on the head, in token of penitence, is acceptable to Christ.

The curse upon Capernaum: V. 23. **And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell; for if the mighty works which have been done in thee had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day.** V. 24. **But I say unto you, That it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the Day of Judgment than for thee.** Capernaum, the commercial metropolis of northern Palestine, had been signally marked and blessed by Christ in that He made His home there during the Galilean ministry, and had performed some notable miracles there, and because its inhabitants heard some of His mightiest sermons: Most prosperous, with the greatest spiritual privileges, but the people, as a whole, most unsympathetic toward Christ. Exalted most high, degraded most deeply! Such is its curse. For even Sodom, representing the essence of bestial filth and immorality, would have responded to such evidences of special divine love and mercy. On the Day of Judgment, therefore, Sodom also will be preferred above Capernaum. It is a terrible thing to despise God's visitation of grace. All those that have had an opportunity to learn about Christ and His work, but refuse repentance and faith, will receive a severer judgment on the last day and will be condemned to greater damnation than other sinners that were not so signally blessed with the revelation of truth.

The Gospel Call. Matt. 11, 25—30.

A most devout prayer of thanksgiving: V. 25. **At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because Thou hast hid these**

100) *Expositor's Greek Testament*, 1, 175.

things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. V. 26. **Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Thy sight.** The final purpose of the entire work of salvation, in all its various branches, is the glorification of God. These things, the mysteries of the kingdom of God, are hidden from those that are wise in their own conceit, that believe themselves to be above the eternal revelations of God's wisdom in His Word. The scribes and Pharisees of Israel deemed themselves the custodians of the wisdom and understanding of the Law in all its applications. To them the Gospel is hidden, because they deliberately close their hearts and minds against its beauties. But to babes, those that are as ignorant of this world's wisdom as little children, God has revealed the glory of the Gospel. It is necessary for him that would know the beauties of God's message of salvation to men and of the entire Bible which contains this message that he rid himself of all preconceived ideas on moral and religious subjects, and be ready and eager to give unqualified assent to all that God says in His Word, 2 Cor. 10, 5. 6. For such a condition of heart on the part of believers Christ glorifies His heavenly Father, through whose power the hearts are made ready to receive the Scriptures with all humility. That is the Father's good pleasure, although it also redounds to His glory if the proud and wise of this world reject the Word of grace. So far as the Bible with its glorious and saving truths is concerned, especially that truth that a man is saved, not by works, but by grace through faith alone, it must always be the anxious endeavor of every Christian, aided by the strength from above, to avoid the doubting and doubt-instilling wisdom of this world, and present evermore such a heart that has a childlike trust and faith in Jesus and His merits, and in all the revealed truths of Holy Writ. "There are two things over which Jesus here is glad. The first, that God has hidden such mystery from the wise and understanding. The other, that He has revealed it to the little ones, the simple, the babes. Those are the children and babes that do not talk against the Word of God, that do not murmur against God's will, but, as He deals with them, they are well pleased with it. This includes all those that are not wise and understanding in their own conceit, nor fall into God's work and Word with their reason." 101)

A majestic assertion: V. 27. **All things are delivered unto Me of My Father: and no man knoweth the Son but the Father: neither knoweth any man the Father save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him.** A most sweeping assertion: to Christ, according to His human nature, all things are given into His power. He is the sovereign dispenser of all things, all good things and gifts come from Him, Matt. 28, 18. And the relation between Him, even according to His human nature, and the heavenly Father, is a most intimate one. He alone thoroughly knows the Father, just as the Father thoroughly knows the Son. There is full comprehension, perfect understanding between the two persons of the Godhead, because they are one in essence. Whosoever acknowledges, knows, believes in the Father and the Son and in their counsel of salvation through the Son, receives this knowledge and belief from the Son, who reveals God and His love to the world. He wishes and He wills the salvation of men.

The gracious invitation: V. 28. **Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.** V. 29. **Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.** V. 30. **For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light.** No mere man could have spoken these words, so full of heavenly majesty and divine comfort. Christ purposely makes use of many Old Testament phrases, but He applies them all to Himself, thus showing that all the types are realized and fulfilled in Him. Full of both authority and kindness is His call, going out to the fatigued and the burdened, to the poor sinners whose weight of transgressions is bowing them down to earth, who can find no solace or relief in all the wide world. In Him they all find rest, relief, new life, new strength, whether their burden be one placed upon them by others or foolishly taken up by themselves. Instead of this load, which is bound to drag them down to everlasting damnation, Christ will supply another, far different burden, one which, by a paradox, is rather a privilege. For it is His yoke, the yoke of the cross, which the Christians must bear in this world, as followers of Him that bore His cross for our sake. His example will be a steady reminder that we must learn in all things, in the midst of the sorrows and tribulations of the world, to follow His meekness and lowliness, which was not outward, assumed, but a meekness of the heart. This burden of Christian obligation is kindly to bear, it is light to stand up under; there is nothing grievous and oppressive about it, because, in the final analysis, He bears both us and our burdens in love: He gives rest unto our souls, such rest, such complete satisfaction as comes through the knowledge of the Savior and His complete redemption, 2 Cor. 4, 17; 7, 4; Rom. 8, 35. Far from separating us from the love of God in Christ Jesus, the tribulation of this present life, the cross which we bear for the sake of our Lord, binds us more closely to Him with bands of everlasting strength. "The believers look upon the invisible only and not upon the visible, they adhere with simple, pure faith to the Word. And it is true also in regard to temporal things, as we said above, that the goods which we have

101) Luther, 7, 829.

from God are more important and more excellent than temporal misfortune can be. But how much more is this true in the Church, where this word is sounded: My burden is light, namely, for those that believe My words; and My yoke is easy, namely, if we look upon Christ, who has promised to give us rest, as He Himself says there: And ye shall find rest unto your souls. For these words: Ye shall find, indicate that the pious are without rest for a time. But such turbulent time is short; the rest of the souls, however, which the believers will find, will be important and eternal." 102) That is the final comfort of the Gospel-promise: There remaineth a rest to the people of God, Heb. 4, 9.

Summary. *John sends a delegation to Christ, which gives the latter an opportunity to testify concerning the Baptist and His own work. Jesus also pronounces a woe upon the chief Galilean cities and issues a majestic Gospel invitation.*

102) Luther, 1, 1343. 1344.

CHAPTER 12.

The Lord of the Sabbath.

Matt. 12, 1—13.

The hungry disciples: V. 1. **At that time, Jesus went on the Sabbath day through the corn, and His disciples were an hungred, and began to pluck the ears of corn, and to eat.** While Jesus was engaged in the work of His ministry in Galilee, He came into conflict with the Sabbath observance of the Pharisees. His disciples, who accompanied Him on His walk, became hungry. Now they were on a path leading through a field of grain, which was ready for harvest. "These paths are often exceedingly rough. They were never surveyed and never repaired. They were simply devoted to public use by immemorial custom. If a landowner wished to raise grain in a field through which one of these paths ran, he plowed up to the very edge of the narrow path and put in his seed. There were neither fences nor ditches to separate the road from the field. Fields traversed by such roads are still very common in Palestine. It was along such a road that Jesus and the disciples were traveling when they plucked the ears of wheat on the Sabbath." 103) Note: The Law permitted a hungry man to pluck ears from the field of another, in order to still the pangs of his hunger, Deut. 23, 25. But this was on a Sabbath, or, as Luke says, on the second Sabbath after the first, Luke 6, 1, that is, the first Sabbath after the second day of the Passover, when the sheaf of first-fruits was offered, Lev. 23, 10. 11; for in this way, and from this day, did the Jews reckon the time until the Feast of Weeks, or Pentecost. Hardly, however, had the disciples begun to pluck ears when fault was found.

The objection of the Pharisees: V. 2. **But when the Pharisees saw it, they said unto Him, Behold, Thy disciples do that which is not lawful to do upon the Sabbath day.** The malicious faultfinders deliberately made a mountain out of a mole-hill and construed the action with their usual intolerance. The plucking to them became reaping, and the rubbing with the hands to remove the hulls in their eyes became threshing. There was no wrong done even from the standpoint of the strictest interpretation of the Jewish Law. But the Pharisees so construed it and took offense, incidentally accusing Christ as an accomplice for permitting the sacrilege. Christ's answer: V. 3. **But He said unto them, Have ye not read what David did when he was an hungred, and they that were with him,** v. 4. **how he entered into the house of God, and did eat the show-bread, which was not lawful for him to eat, neither for them which were with him, but only for the priests?** V. 5. **Or have ye not read in the Law how on the Sabbath days the priests in the Temple profane the Sabbath, and are blameless?** Jesus had a most disconcerting way of quoting Scripture to His enemies, which usually resulted in their chagrin and shameful rout. He has two examples for them: David, in fleeing before the wrath of Saul, came to the sanctuary of the Lord at Nob, 1 Sam. 21, 1—6, where Ahimelech, the priest, gave him the show-bread, the bread of the countenance of God, from the table in the Holy Place. These consecrated breadcakes were to be eaten by the priests only, Lev. 24, 8. 9, and yet David, the great model of Jewish piety, ate of this hallowed bread with his men. And again: The priests, in the regular discharge of their duties, in sacrificing the burnt offerings in the morning and evening services of the Sabbath day, were technically transgressing the Sabbath law, with its absolute prohibition of work, thus, if one would argue from the standpoint of the Pharisees, actually profaning the Sabbath.

The application of the argument: V. 6. **But I say unto you, That in this place is One greater than the Temple.** V. 7. **But if ye had known what this meaneth, I will have mercy and not sacrifice, ye would not have condemned the guiltless.** V. 8. **For the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath day.** Christ's argument itself could not be challenged, but He now brings out the principles involved to reveal the smallness and the uncharitableness of their hearts. In the first place: He is greater than the Jewish Law and the Temple. What was permitted to the priests that served

103) Barton, *Archeology and the Bible*, 132.

in the Temple must surely be conceded as a right to His disciples. Then also: The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath. The greatest law finding its application here is the law of charity, Hos. 6, 6. All the sacrifices made in punctilious observance of the letter of the Law cannot be placed on a level with the mercy, with the love, which is the fulfilment of the Law. A heart that realizes the need of the neighbor and cheerfully helps in obtaining all that is needed, is engaged in a higher form of worship than that which upholds a rigorous legalism. And finally: Christ openly declares that He is the Lord of the Sabbath. He is the founder of the New Covenant. All the Old Testament precepts concerning sacrifices, Sabbath, festivals, were only shadows of things to come. They have lost their force since Christ has now been revealed. The Word of God and the law of love alone rule in the New Testament.

The application of these principles: V. 9. **And when He was departed thence, He went into their synagog.** V. 10. **And, behold, there was a man which had his hand withered, and they asked Him, saying, Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath days? that they might accuse Him.** V. 11. **And He said unto them, What man shall there be among you that shall have one sheep, and if it fall into a pit on the Sabbath day, will he not lay hold on it and lift it out?** V. 12. **How much, then, is a man better than a sheep! Wherefore it is lawful to do well on the Sabbath days.** V. 13. **Then said He to the man, Stretch forth thine hand; and he stretched it forth, and it was restored whole, like as the other.** The hatred of the Pharisees was intensified with each new defeat. They had received a well-deserved rebuke based upon Scriptural grounds, but they were determined to turn the admiration of the people into suspicion and then into opposition. And so they laid their plans for another Sabbath, Mark 3, 2; Luke 6, 6. Jesus, according to His custom, went into the synagog to teach. And there, evidently by design, was a man with a dried-up, shriveled hand. Here was a case which could bear postponement till the morrow. But so eager are the Pharisees to provoke the Lord that they put a question with reference to the lawfulness of healing on the Sabbath day. Christ's reply, two counter-questions and an irresistible conclusion. A man with any feelings at all, seeing the misery of a dumb beast, aside from the fact that it is his one possession, will draw the sheep out of the cistern. Their own rabbis, at that time, made provision for such cases. And a man should not receive as much consideration as an animal? Their own canons permitted the doing well on the Sabbath. It is, therefore, right to heal. Christ defied the authority of the Pharisees, and challenged them to bring accusation against Him. And the sick man, in obeying the command of Christ, acknowledged His authority and set aside that of the Jewish leaders. A signal manifestation of faith, on the one hand, an instance of divine power, on the other: the best fulfilment of the Sabbath.

The Enmity of the Pharisees and Christ's Answer. Matt. 12, 14—30.

V. 14. **Then the Pharisees went out and held a council against Him, how they might destroy Him.** Overawed for the moment, and unable to formulate an answer, their envy and malice soon leads them from finding fault to plotting against the Lord's life. They came together and conferred with one another with the express object of finding ways and means to put Him to death. So far can hypocrisy debase a person that the most outrageous uncharitableness and lack of mercy, even deadly hatred and enmity, are covered over with pious customs and a sanctimonious behavior.

Jesus retires: V. 15. **But when Jesus knew it, He withdrew Himself from thence; and great multitudes followed Him, and He healed them all,** v. 16. **and charged them that they should not make Him known,** v. 17. **that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying,** v. 18. **Behold My Servant whom I have chosen, My Beloved in whom My soul is well pleased: I will put My Spirit upon Him, and He shall show judgment to the Gentiles.** V. 19. **He shall not strive nor cry, neither shall any man hear His voice in the streets.** V. 20. **A bruised reed shall He not break, and smoking flax shall He not quench, till He send forth judgment unto victory.** V. 21. **And in His name shall the Gentiles trust.** The hour of Jesus had not yet come in which He would be delivered into the hands of His enemies, so He left the city in which He had had the encounter with the Pharisees. The spell of His personality and of His words was still upon the people, who followed Him in crowds. And His Savior sympathy went out to them in the same miraculous manifestations, in works of healing. But more than ever He disliked and discouraged publicity, since it was bound to do harm to His work at this stage. He therefore begged them with an almost threatening attitude not to reveal Him. He wanted to perform His ministry, for the present, almost in concealment. And herein was the prophecy Is. 42, 1—4 fulfilled. The servant of Jehovah is the Messiah, Jesus Christ, who, according to His human nature, had received the Spirit of God at His baptism, who, at the same time, had been acknowledged as the Son of God, whose Gospel-message was to be the light of the Gentiles till the ends of the earth. His spirit would be neither that of contention nor of blatant self-advertising after the manner of preachers that bring their names to the

front, but forget the Gospel they were sent to preach. So gentle, sympathetic, and kind would His spiritual ministry be that those that are weak, whose faith was at the point of extinction, could depend upon His help. The bruised reed is carefully bound up until the contusion is healed: the weak Christian receives strength from above. The lamp of faith which is at the point of expiring will receive fresh oil from the Gospel. By this manner of working in and through the Gospel the Messiah will lead His Gospel to victory over all the forces of Satan and man's pride, and the Gentiles themselves, at present still far from the testimonies of promise, will learn to trust in His name. A short, but comprehensive statement concerning the Messianic work of Christ, the miracles of His prophetic office.

A demoniac healed: V. 22. **Then was brought unto Him one possessed with a devil, blind, and dumb; and He healed him, insomuch that the blind and dumb both spake and saw.** This narrative fittingly illustrates the gradual growth of opposition, hatred, enmity, malice, and calumny on the part of the Pharisees. A man was brought to Christ whom the Evil Spirit had deprived of both sight and speech, thus torturing him by the loss of these senses. V. 23. **And all the people were amazed and said, Is not this the Son of David?** Their minds had not yet been saturated with the poison of enmity toward Christ; they were frankly overwhelmed by this new evidence of divine power, and openly declared their conviction that this man must be the Son of David in the absolute sense, the promised Messiah, in whom the prophets had bid them trust. They still express themselves somewhat doubtfully, however: Can this possibly be He? There can surely no longer be any doubt. The Pharisees, ever present, immediately harbored bitter thoughts: V. 24. **But when the Pharisees heard it, they said, This fellow doth not cast out devils but by Beelzebub, the prince of the devils.** This thought was provoked by the frank expression of amazement on the part of the people. Apparently, they did not voice their sentiments outside of their own circle, because they feared the multitude; but, after the manner of their kind, they murmured and grumbled among themselves, accusing Christ of being in league with the devil, as once before, chapter 9, 34. Beelzebub, which means god of flies, and Beelzebul, god of dung, had originally been names of idols, and were by the Jews applied to the devil. It was an insult without parallel which they thus heaped upon the Lord.

Christ takes them to task: V. 25. **And Jesus knew their thoughts and said unto them, Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand:** v. 26. **and if Satan cast out Satan, he is divided against himself; how, then, shall his kingdom stand?** V. 27. **And if I by Beelzebub cast out devils, by whom do your children cast them out? Therefore they shall be your judges.** V. 28. **But if I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you.** Christ not only knew of the efforts of the Pharisees to discredit Him, but as He that searches hearts and minds He knew their very words, and therefore immediately shows the foolishness of such talk, the absurdity of the accusation and its implication. Just as it is proverbially true that lack of unity and harmony disrupts a nation, and that the same condition in a household or in a community will sever the relations which make for growth and prosperity, so it is true of the kingdom of Satan. There seems to be a lurking implication in the expression of Christ: Such follies are sometimes committed by communities, civil wars being by no means unknown, although history shows the fatal consequences in scores of cases. But Satan, wicked as he is, is not such a fool. The thought that Satan would try to evict Satan or any of the devils is the height of absurdity. Give him credit for greater sharpness of wit. And Jesus strengthens His argument by showing how their accusation against Him condemns themselves. The Pharisees had children, or disciples, whom they trained to be exorcists, Acts 9, 13. 14, who made a practise to journey through the country and attempt to drive out demons from those possessed. They used certain medicines, but depended mainly upon magical formulas, in which the name of Jehovah was freely used. The reference to these performances effectually blocked the Pharisees. To answer now meant to condemn themselves and their own practises. They were silenced, judged, and condemned by their own criticism. Jesus, however, in His extraordinary success in expelling demons, demonstrated beyond doubt that the Spirit of God was on His side, the same Spirit who, in and through Him, had brought the kingdom of God to them and sought to work faith in their hearts.

Another illustration: V. 29. **Or else, how can one enter into a strong man's house, and spoil his goods, except he first bind the strong man? and then he will spoil his house.** V. 30. **He that is not with Me is against Me; and he that gathereth not with Me scattereth abroad.** In case they were not yet convinced, He will attempt to establish His position by another parabolic saying. Every demoniac is a captive of Satan, bound, body and soul, in his power, to do his will. But Christ has come to destroy the works of the devil, 1 John 3, 8. He wants to take the stronghold of the enemy and wrest his prey from him. This Jesus did, not only in the individual cases when He cured demoniacs, but by His entire life, suffering, and death, by His active and passive obedience in behalf of all

men. He has gained a complete deliverance from the bondage of the devil. On His side, in His strength is victory, and there alone. This fact gives emphasis to the warning statement as to the alternative: either for or against Christ. There is no middle ground in this decision, there is no neutrality in this fight. This referred not only to the Pharisees, whose enmity was growing more evident every day, but especially to those among the people that were still undecided. The so-called neutral people that do not wish to oppose Christ outright, but also do not wish to antagonize the children of the world, the wise blasphemers, are, in the last analysis, enemies of the work of Christ and hinder the coming of the Kingdom. Instead of gathering with the Lord of the harvest, their hesitancy, their vacillating policy, harms His cause.

The Sin against the Holy Ghost.

Matt. 12, 31—37.

A solemn warning: V. 31. **Wherefore I say unto you, All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men; but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men.** V. 32. **And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of Man, it shall be forgiven him; but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come.** The Jews were having their day of grace with manifestations of God's mercy such as had never been granted to any nation before. The Spirit was making a most gracious effort to reach their hearts and minds through the Word as preached by Christ and His disciples. But their leaders and many of the common people were deliberately hardening their hearts against the influence of Christ's work and message. As long as the opposition and even the blasphemy would flow mainly from ignorance and be directed chiefly against the person of Christ, there would be opportunity and probability of repentance. Just as soon, however, as there is blaspheming against the Holy Ghost, then all this is changed. For this implies that a person has, indeed, conceded and acknowledged Jesus as the Redeemer of the world, that he has had the conviction of faith, that he was unable to deny the evidence; but in the face of evidence and conviction he deliberately, blasphemously rejects the work of the Holy Ghost for his salvation. The phrase: Neither in this world nor in the world to come, emphatically declares that the peculiar nature of this sin precludes all forgiveness; there is absolutely no hope.

Kindred warnings: V. 33. **Either make the tree good and his fruit good, or else make the tree corrupt and his fruit corrupt; for the tree is known by his fruit.** V. 34. **O generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.** V. 35. **A good man, out of the good treasure of the heart, bringeth forth good things; and an evil man, out of the evil treasure, bringeth forth evil things.** V. 36. **But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the Day of Judgment.** V. 37. **For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned.** These words no longer describe the sin against the Holy Ghost, but they characterize the conduct of such as may be in danger of hardening their hearts against the benign influences of Christ and His Gospel-message. It is the nature of a good tree to yield good fruit; it is the nature of a putrid, rotten tree to have rotten, bad fruit. All depends upon the relation to Christ, whether a person does good or evil works. As for those that followed the Pharisees in their hatred and its consequences: generation of vipers, He calls them. The malice, the hypocrisy, the deceit of serpents is their outstanding trait, Matt. 3, 7; Ps. 140, 3. John the Baptist and Christ agree in their judgment of them. Satanic evil is all that one may expect from a morally hopeless brood. The poison of their nature must come out in the filthiness, in the malevolence, in the enmity of their tongue. A significant fact: In the midst of His scathing denunciation Jesus uses a proverb that has a good interpretation as well as an evil. The heart, filled to the brim with certain thoughts, naturally overflows in the words expressing the condition of the heart. If the heart be a treasure-house of good, edifying thoughts and desires, they strive to come out in kind, edifying speech. But if sinful desires have taken possession of the heart, there will be passionate outbursts in words directed against all the commandments, Matt. 15, 19; Mark 7, 21. And this is no small matter: Every idle, vain, empty, superfluous word, spoken without need or the purpose of edifying, is a matter of record before God, and must be answered for at the final Judgment. For the word, as the ancient Greeks were wont to say, is the revelation of the soul. Words are the index of a good or a bad heart, of a heart firm in the faith in Christ and full of love toward Him, or of a heart that has never taken thought of the will of the Lord, and is bad out of pure inertness toward that which Christ has declared to be good — the poorest species of unbelief.

The Sign from Heaven and a Warning.

Matt. 12, 38—45.

A request: V. 38. **Then certain of the scribes and of the Pharisees answered, saying, Master, we would see a sign from Thee.** The emphatic manner of speaking which Christ had been employing may not have been without influence upon some of His hearers. Some of those that were not yet open blas-

phemers may have been sincere enough in asking for some proof of Messianic authority in making such statements. On the other hand, the connection will hardly permit such a charitable interpretation. No, those that had just cast the suspicion of Satanic influence upon Christ resented the fact that He was assuming royal and judicial authority before them. They rejected His claims. Probably in open derision they ask for a sign from heaven to substantiate the claims which they believed absurd.

The refusal: V. 39. **But He answered and said unto them, An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign, and there shall no sign be given to it but the sign of the prophet Jonas. V. 40. For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly, so shall the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.** An evil brood and adulterous He calls them. He saw into their hearts and judged them accordingly. He knew what their purpose in asking a miracle was, since they were not earnest seekers after truth. In a spiritual sense they were adulterers, Is. 23, 17; they were idolaters, since they rejected Him, the Messiah of the world. They would join with the heathens in the act of His condemnation and crucifixion. One sign, one great miracle, indeed, would be given to them and to the world: His resurrection, typified in the history of the prophet Jonas. The belief in His resurrection will for this generation and for all the generations to come be the touchstone by which the followers of Christ will be distinguished from His enemies. Jesus refers to the time between His burial and resurrection according to the Jewish manner of reckoning time, any part of a day being counted as a full day.

A warning call: V. 41. **The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation and shall condemn it, because they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and, behold, a greater than Jonas is here. V. 42. The queen of the South shall rise up in the Judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it; for she came from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and, behold, a greater than Solomon is here.** The mention of Jonas brings on the further thought. The Ninevites heard and heeded the call to repentance as it was made by Jonas, Jonah 3, 10. He was only a prophet called by God to bring this message, whereas here was the Author of the message Himself in the midst of the Jews, and both His person and His message were unheeded. On the Day of Judgment, therefore, these heathen people will rise in accusation against the Jewish nation and their leaders. They will bring a formal charge and complaint, and show them to be guilty in their rejection of Christ. In the same way the great queen that came to see Solomon and hear his wisdom, 1 Kings 10, will appear before the tribunal of God on the last day and add her testimony to that of the Ninevites for the condemnation of the Jews. From a far country, from Arabia Felix, she came to hear the wisdom of a mere man. But here the eternal Wisdom from on high was expounding the counsel of God from eternity, and yet that generation rejected Man and message.

A comparison: V. 43. **When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places seeking rest, and findeth none. V. 44. Then he saith, I will return into my house from whence I came out; and when he is come, he findeth it empty, swept, and garnished. V. 45. Then goeth he and taketh with himself seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there; and the last state of that man is worse than the first. Even so shall it be also unto this wicked generation.** The last words give the key to the entire passage. The people of that generation were like demoniacs, from whom the evil spirits have been driven. They had their opportunity now to be rid of the Evil One's influence forever. If they would continue to despise His message, their experience would be like that of the man whom He describes. The deserts were represented as the habitation of the devils, Job 30, 3; Rev. 28, 2; Lev. 16, 21. Banished into the wilderness of desolation, but continually moving in search of a resting-place, and failing to find relief from the tediousness and monotony, the evil spirit resolves to return to his former habitation. The recital is dramatic: Coming, he finds it empty, swept, and garnished; no good spirit has been permitted to make his home there; all love, meekness, and every good impulse has been thrust out, and vain, showy trifles of fashion and folly are decorating the heart. With so much encouragement the result is easily seen. Seven associates the evil spirit chooses, all of them morally even lower than himself; and all of the devils together make such a person their lasting home. Such is the damnable self-surrender of such as deliberately harden their heart in rejection of Christ and in voluntary unbelief. Theirs is the sin of sins. The fate here pictured by Christ is the one which will overtake all that despise the merciful visitation of Christ in and through His Gospel, that have heard His message of love, but have forgotten and despised His gifts. They are children of destruction in a twofold sense, by nature and by choice. And their end is damnation.

Christ's Relatives. Matt. 12, 46—50.

V. 46. **While He yet talked to the people, behold, His mother and His brethren stood without, desiring to speak with Him. V. 47. Then one said unto Him, Behold, Thy mother and Thy brethren stand without, desiring to speak with Thee. V. 48. But He answered, and said unto him**

that told Him, Who is My mother? and who are My brethren? V. 49. And He stretched forth His hand toward His disciples and said, Behold My mother and My brethren! V. 50. For whosoever shall do the will of My Father which is in heaven, the same is My brother, and sister, and mother. This interruption is not to be explained as vanity or a desire to interfere with the Lord's work. Mary had not learned her lesson in vain, Luke 2, 49; John 2, 4. And His other relatives, whether they were His cousins, or stepbrothers, or true brothers, were guided by Mary. It was rather tender solicitude on the part of Mary. It may have happened more than once that the friends of Jesus were afraid He might become distraught on account of too constant application to preaching and healing, Mark 3, 21. Jesus makes use of the opportunity to give a lesson to at least a part of the assembled multitude. Natural affection and relationship cannot interfere with the sovereign claims of duty. It may be necessary, under circumstances, for the sake of Christ and the Kingdom, to deny all human ties, as Christ did here. With an eloquent, sweeping gesture, which included His disciples standing near Him, He gave His definition. They whose hearts are bound up in Christ's, they whose faith in Christ causes them to acknowledge the true Fatherhood of God, and makes them eager to live a life of service in doing His will, are knit together with Him in the closest possible union. To them Christ is in deed and truth their brother, and they are, in the fullest sense of the word, brothers, and sisters, and mothers of Christ. This spiritual relationship is the most wonderful and the most valuable in the world, it is often the one thing which upholds the Christian in the midst of the opposition and the trials of these last days, since the full acknowledgment will be made in heaven.

Summary. *Christ proclaims Himself Lord of the Sabbath, performs a miracle in support of this principle, defends Himself against the accusation of being in league with the devil, warns against the sin of blasphemy against the Holy Ghost and hardening of the heart, refers to the final sign of His resurrection, and teaches what relationship with Him implies.*

THE OBSERVANCE OF SUNDAY.

"Those that are of the opinion that the order of Sunday has been established as necessary in place of the Sabbath, are badly in error. For the Holy Scripture has abrogated the Sabbath, and teaches that all ceremonies of the old Law may be omitted after the revelation of the Gospel; and yet, since it has been necessary to establish a certain day, in order that the people might know when they should come together, the Christian Church has ordained Sunday for that purpose, and has had all the more pleasure and desire for this change, in order that the people might have an example of Christian liberty and know that the observance neither of the Sabbath nor of any other day is necessary." 104)

"St. Paul and the entire New Testament have abolished the Sabbath of the Jews, in order that it may be palpable that the Sabbath concerns the Jews only. Therefore it is not necessary that the heathens keep the Sabbath, though it was a great and strict law with the Jews. The prophets have also adduced that this Sabbath should be abolished. Isaiah, in the last chapter, verse 23, says: When the Master comes, there will be such a time that one new moon will follow the other, one Sabbath be beside the other. As though he would say: Every day will be Sabbath, every day will be new moon. Thus, in the New Testament the Sabbath no longer exists after the rude, external form. For this commandment also has a twofold meaning like the other commandments, an external and an internal, or spiritual, one. With the Christians of the New Testament all days are holy days, and all days are free. Therefore Christ says: The Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath, Matt. 12, 8. Therefore Paul in various places admonishes the Christians to permit themselves to be bound by no days: Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years. I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labor in vain, Gal. 4, 10. 11. Again, to the Colossians still more plainly: Let no man, therefore, judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holy-day, or of the new moon, or of the Sabbath days, which are a shadow of things to come, Col. 2, 16. 17; Rom. 14, 5.

"Though the Sabbath is now abolished and the consciences are free from it, it is still good, and also necessary, to observe one special day in the week, in order to use, to hear and learn the Word of God on that day. For not every one can tend to it every day. Nature also demands that men be quiet one day in the week, and both men and beasts abstain from work. But whosoever would make a necessary commandment of the Sabbath, as of a work demanded by God, must keep the Saturday, and not the Sunday; for the Saturday is commanded to the Jews, and not the Sunday. The Christians, however, have till now kept the Sunday and not the Saturday, for this reason, since Christ arose on a Sunday. This is a certain indication that the Sabbath no longer concerns us, and all of Moses [the ceremonial law]; else we should be obliged to keep the Saturday; and this is a great and strong proof that the Sabbath is abrogated. For throughout the whole New Testament we find no passage in which the celebration of the Sabbath is commanded to us Christians.

"Why, then, is the Sunday observed by the Christians? Although all days are free, and one is as the other, it is still useful and good, yea, very necessary that one day be celebrated, whether it be the Sabbath, the Sunday, or any other day. For God wants to lead the world carefully and rule over it peacefully; therefore

104) *Augsburg Confession*, Of the Power of the Church, Mueller, 67.

has He given six days for work, but on the seventh day servants, day-laborers, and workmen of all kinds, yea, also horses, oxen, and other working cattle, shall have rest, as the sense of this commandment is, in order that by rest they might find recreation. And above all, that they who at other times have no leisure, may hear the sermon on the holy day, and thereby learn to know God. And for such reasons, namely, for the sake of charity and necessity, has the Sunday remained, not on account of the Law of Moses, but for the sake of our need, that we might rest, and that we might learn the Word of God." 105)

105) Luther, 3, 1083—1085.

CHAPTER 13.

The Parable of the Sower. Matt. 13, 1—23.

V. 1. **The same day went Jesus out of the house, and sat by the seaside.** V. 2. **And great multitudes were gathered together unto Him, so that He went into a ship and sat, and the whole multitude stood on the shore.** Though the shadow of unbelief and of spiritual hostility is evident even in this chapter, it nevertheless affords a welcome relief from the strained condition of Christ's last encounter with the Pharisees. It was on the same day, indeed, but under entirely different conditions. Note: Christ hardly ever is represented as having become weary; He was untiring in His labors for the salvation of men; He never permitted an opportunity to do good to escape His tender solicitude. Leaving the house where He was staying in Capernaum, He went out to the shore of the lake and sat down, probably for a confidential talk with His disciples. But the usual crowds came together and surrounded Him, making it necessary for Him to enter into a boat, where He sat down, while the people occupied the space between the sea and the rise of land toward the west as a natural amphitheater. His power and popularity as a teacher had not yet diminished, in spite of all the efforts of the Pharisees, but Christ Himself was preparing for a change of sentiment, as His parables indicate.

The parable story: V. 3. **And He spake many things unto them in parables, saying: Behold, a sower went forth to sow.** V. 4. **And when he sowed, some seeds fell by the wayside, and the fowls came, and devoured them up.** V. 5. **Some fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth; and forthwith they sprung up, because they had no deepness of earth.** V. 6. **And when the sun was up, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away.** V. 7. **And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprung up and choked them.** V. 8. **But other fell into good ground, and brought forth fruit, some an hundredfold, some sixtyfold, some thirtyfold.** Parables are stories of comparison, and as Jesus employed them, He made use of the familiar in nature and in human life and experience to teach and bring home the great facts of His kingdom in its real and in its apparent form. Even ordinarily the Orientals were fond of parables, but Jesus had, besides, a remarkably effective way of catching the attention of His hearers, and emphasizing the important points in the comparison. The parable of the fourfold soil is an example. There is a farmer, a husbandman, such as the people of Galilee were accustomed to see, engaged in sowing his grain, broadcast. It cannot be avoided that some of the seed falls upon the pathway leading through the field, such as were common in Palestine. The result: The grains are trodden under foot; the birds, all manner of birds, pick them up as welcome food. Some of the seeds find lodgment in the stony soil, where the rock was close to the surface, with only a thin covering of earth. The result: The rock holds the heat, there is a quick sprouting and shooting up into the air, but a still quicker scorching by the sun, since the roots have no chance to enter deeply into the ground. Other grains fell among the thorns, where the plow had indeed been used, but had not succeeded in clearing away all the thorn roots. The result: The hardier weeds with their heavy foliage cut off air, light, and moisture from the tender stalks of grain, thus suffocating them. But other seed fell upon good soil, rich, loamy, soft, deep, clean, where it had moisture and sunlight in the right proportion, and could grow up and fulfil the hopes of the husbandman, bringing a rich return for his labor. Jesus cries out in conclusion: V. 9. **Who hath ears to hear, let him hear.** A hint that there is a hidden meaning in the story, and that every hearer should find this meaning and apply it properly. Where is there a similar experience in the spiritual life?

The request for an explanation: V. 10. **And the disciples came and said unto Him, Why speakest Thou unto them in parables?** The disciples who were present with Jesus, including probably even some of the twelve apostles, were still remarkably dense in spiritual matters. They had little understanding of the kingdom of God and of the real reason and end of Christ's mission. They were not mainly concerned about the method of teaching, but about the explanation of the story. — The reason for speaking in parables: V. 11. **He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given.** V. 12. **For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and**

he shall have more abundance; but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath. V. 13. **Therefore speak I to them in parables; because they, seeing, see not, and hearing, they hear not, neither do they understand.** V. 14. **And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias, which saith, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive.** V. 15. **For this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed, lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them.** Christ divides His hearers into two classes; but far from expounding a Calvinistic double decree in God, He makes a very careful distinction in explanation of the different positions toward Him and His message. To you it is given, He tells the disciples. It is not a matter of greater intelligence or of greater moral worth, but only of God's gracious gift through the Holy Ghost. The mysteries of the kingdom of heaven they are to know through His agency, the truths once hidden, but now revealed and made known in order to add souls to the Kingdom, to His Church. The disciples had been given, and they had received, this knowledge for the salvation of their souls. The Spirit gave it to them that they not only heard and saw, but also understood with the heart and believed, as Luther says. And these mercies were to be multiplied upon them. Their understanding and their possession of the wonderful mysteries of God should grow from day to day, giving them, finally, a rich abundance of God's mercies. But the other class did not receive Christ's message, therefore to them nothing more is given. He that lacks understanding in spiritual matters will become more and more impoverished from day to day. It is the judgment of God upon a perverse people, due entirely to their own guilt and rejection of Him and His mercy. Isaiah had been obliged to take them to task for this refusal to bow under the hand of God, Is. 6, 9. 10. He had announced to them the judgment of God. Their physical eyes and ears may be in commission, but the understanding of their soul would become duller with the passage of time. Their heart would become stupid, they would have ever greater difficulty in hearing the voice of God, their eyes would become closed to the offering of His mercy. That is the judgment of God upon those that harden their hearts against the Gospel of mercy, whose prime purpose is to save souls. This judgment upon Israel began in the days of the Prophet Isaiah, and was completed in the days of Christ and the apostles. The great mass of the people of Palestine, both in Judea and Galilee, hardened their hearts against Christ's Word and work. And so the preaching of Christ finally became unto them a savor of death unto death, 2 Cor. 2, 16.

The blessedness of Christ's followers: V. 16. **But blessed are your eyes, for they see; and your ears, for they hear.** V. 17. **For verily I say unto you, That many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them.** The full and true happiness is that of having eyes and ears opened by the benign mercy of Jesus. Not only were the outward members of the disciples' bodies blessed for being witnesses of the fulfilment of the Old Testament, of seeing Him and being in constant, intimate communion with Him, to whom the whole ancient covenant pointed forward, whom the prophets and the righteous people from Eve and Jacob to Malachi and Simeon had longed to behold, but the eyes of their understanding were enlightened by His power. They knew Jesus as their Savior, and were happy in this knowledge.

The interpretation of the parable: V. 18. **Hear ye, therefore, the parable of the sower.** V. 19. **When any one heareth the Word of the Kingdom, and understandeth it not, then cometh the Wicked One, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart: this is he which received seed by the wayside.** V. 20. **But he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the Word, and anon with joy receiveth it.** V. 21. **Yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while; for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the Word, by and by he is offended.** V. 22. **He also that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the Word, and the care of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the Word, and he becometh unfruitful.** V. 23. **But he that received seed into the good ground is he that heareth the Word and understandeth it, which also beareth fruit, and bringeth forth, some an hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.** He sets His disciples apart: Ye therefore hear, and, in hearing, learn the lesson. The seed that is sown in the Kingdom and for the purpose of winning for the Kingdom, is always the same, the Word of God, just as He is the same that does the sowing, either personally, as in the days of His earthly career, or through His servants, as at the present time. But there are also four different kinds of soil in spiritual matters. Some there are (and it is true of all that act in the same way) that pay fleeting attention to the Message of the Kingdom. They have somehow come into contact with the Church, some phase of church-work has struck their fancy. But there is no understanding, they literally do not take it into their hearts and minds, the Word never becomes a real factor in their lives. In this case the Evil One, Satan, has little difficulty in

snatching away the truth which they have just barely grasped with their intellect, 2 Tim. 4, 4; 2 Thess. 2, 11. "To us it does not seem a dangerous matter to hear the Word of God, and yet not keep it; those that do it we regard as bad, inattentive people and think it is natural that they hear the sermon and still forget it. But Christ judges differently here and says: The devil takes the Word out of the heart of the people. . . . Therefore, if thou seest a person who permits himself to be talked to and preached to as to a log, and the whole matter amounts to as much as if one strikes into water, . . . then think nothing else than that the devil has sat down in his heart and snatches the seed, the Word of God, away, that he does not believe and is not saved." 106)

Another class of people that are temporary Christians are characterized by the eagerness and apparent joy with which they accept the Word. Their avidity for instruction is sometimes almost embarrassing. But they are quick, emotional, shallow natures. Their faith, though genuine, is not rooted deeply enough to withstand disappointment, especially tribulation, suspicion, hatred, enmity, and the resulting open or hidden persecution on account of the Word. Their rapid acceptance of the Word is equaled only by their hasty offense when they are asked to suffer for the sake of Christ. They want the crown, but not the cross. Not much different is the case of another class, whose members are said to hear the Word, probably with at least an intellectual acceptance. Their hearts have not properly been cleared of the roots of worldly cares and desires. They are not sincere toward the Word, do not use it to purify their hearts. The cares and worries of this world, the love and the desire of riches, fill their hearts and engross their attention. There is no real Christianity in their souls.

Only the fourth class of hearers present soil ready for a crop and fruit that is well-pleasing to the Lord. They are they who hear and heed the Word in fine and good hearts. In this instance the soil of the hearts has been well prepared by the plowing of the Law, which incidentally weeded out all earthly love and care of this world, all selfishness and self-righteousness. Then the Master has sowed His good seed, the Gospel of His mercy. He also sends the fountains of His grace and the sun of His righteousness. And, behold, there is good fruit, though the measure depends upon differences of gifts, of disposition, and of the capacity for receiving and spreading the kingdom of God.

The Parable of the Tares, and Others.

Matt. 13, 24—52.

V. 24. **Another parable put He forth unto them, saying: The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field. V. 25. But while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat and went his way.** An important point: The parable is set forth, is presented, as spiritual food, for instruction of the soul. The kingdom of heaven, the Church of Christ, strictly speaking, includes only such as are united under His leadership by the bonds of a common, sincere faith in Him. But the Lord here, as often, describes the Church as it appears in the world, as we deal with it in concrete form. His picture is again taken from the work of the farmer. A man will certainly sow only the best seed obtainable in his field if he wants a large and heavy crop. That was also the custom of this husbandman. But during the time when men, that is, the average honest man, usually slept, his enemy came with a certain malignant seed, a degenerate form of wheat, whose stalks and spikes closely resemble the true grain (bastard wheat, or darnel), and deliberately and maliciously sowed this weed-seed in the midst of the wheat as thickly as though there were nothing there. Having done his spiteful deed, he went his way. The damage, he knew, could hardly be discovered until it would be too late to remedy matters.

The result of the scheme: V. 26. **But when the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also. V. 27. So the servants of the householder came and said unto him, Sir, didst not thou sow good seed in thy field? From whence, then, hath it tares? V. 28. He said unto them, An enemy hath done this. The servants said unto him, Wilt thou, then, that we go and gather them up? V. 29. But he said, Nay; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them. V. 30. Let both grow together until the harvest; and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them; but gather the wheat into my barn.** The enemy's plan certainly proceeded from devilish ingenuity. For not until the field began to mature and form spikes did the spiteful trick become evident, since the false wheat branches out with ears on each twig. The surprise of the farm-laborers is due to the extent of the area infested with the weeds: surely not due to bad seed nor a case of volunteer growth. The householder knew the reason, some hostile man being the only one that could carry out such a thorough plan to work him harm. Moreover, he is opposed to the plan suggested by the workmen that they go out and pull up all the false wheat. The roots of the tares being intertwined with those of the wheat, the danger was that both would be uprooted together. His plan is rather to wait until the wheat is ripe, when the present objection no longer holds good. The reapers could easily make the proper selection, after which the tares could be tied into bundles to be burned, while the wheat could be brought into the granary. Aside from the Lord's explana-

106) Luther, 13, 204. 205.

tion below, there is a lesson in these words of the householder which should be carefully noted. "According to this example thou canst now also get the proper idea of the manner in which we should proceed against the tares, which are called false doctrine, or the heresies and false Christians of whom this Gospel speaks. For in the Church it happens just the same way: We cannot avoid having evil men in our midst, such as heretics and sectarians, for if one be rooted up, the evil spirit will awaken others. How then shall I proceed? I must eliminate and yet not destroy them. . . . How so? Why, do as the grain does here, let them grow a while. Only be sure to remain lord in thy dominion. Thou preacher, pastor, and hearer, hinder and prevent them, the heretics and rebellious teachers, from ruling and reigning. Let them indeed grumble in the corner, but do not, so far as in thee lies, permit them to come into the pulpit and to the altar. In no other way can one restrain them; for if I should want to eradicate one with force, two would grow in his stead. Therefore thou must act against them in this way, by restraining them through the Word and faith; and let no one take thy pure faith, confession, and Christian life; admonish and upbraid them as much as thou canst; if that has no results, excommunicate them publicly, that every one may regard and shun them as dangerous weeds." 107)

Parable of the mustard seed: V. 31. **Another parable put He forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field;** v. 32. **which indeed is the least of all seeds; but when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof.** He set before them choice spiritual food for their instruction and edification. The kingdom of Christ in its growth is like a grain of mustard seed, whose size and appearance give no intimation of the force of its sprouting nor of the size of the herb at its full maturity, whether one restricts the word to the garden herb or includes the mustard tree of the Orient, whose great size is often referred to by Jewish writers. So large does it become that the birds may make their roosts in its branches. It seems almost incredible that such a tiny seed can produce such a large, treelike plant. But even so, as Christ here predicts, the kingdom of Christ grows from small beginnings until it extends over the whole earth, and becomes a place of rest and of peace for all people. The few despised disciples whom Christ gathered about Him were the nucleus of the great Christian Church, which came into existence and is maintained through the power of the Gospel.

Parable of the leaven: V. 33. **Another parable spake He unto them: The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened.** A very small piece of leaven, or yeast, if set to flour or meal, under the proper conditions, will quickly impart its properties to the entire mass. Jesus purposely takes a large quantity, three *satons* or *seahs* being equal to about sixty pints. The yeast may be hidden by the process of kneading, but it will not be long before its strength will become apparent, and the whole mass be leavened. Thus the Word of God, which builds the Kingdom, also exerts its leavening power in case of individuals as well as in that of whole communities and nations. It has the inherent strength to change and to renew the heart and the life of men and to fit them ever more thoroughly to be true members of the kingdom of God.

An explanation by the evangelist: V. 34. **All these things spake Jesus unto the multitude in parables; and without a parable spake He not unto them,** v. 35. **that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, I will open My mouth in parables, I will utter things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world.** It was at this time that Jesus made use of this form of teaching for reasons which Matthew had indicated above, v. 13. Here again was a prophecy fulfilled, Ps. 78, 2. But, though the majority of the audience no longer had the true spiritual benefit from the beautiful stories which Jesus told them, yet there were a few that would understand His language. For them His teaching became in reality a revealing, a making known, of the wonderful things of God which had been hidden since the foundation of the world, known only within God's council. The invisible, heavenly beauties are here unfolded before the eyes of the unlearned disciples in a simple, appealing manner, though Christ was obliged, especially at first, to open the eyes of their understanding.

Jesus explains the parable of the tares: V. 36. **Then Jesus sent the multitude away and went into the house; and His disciples came unto Him, saying, Declare unto us the parable of the tares of the field.** V. 37. **He answered and said unto them, He that soweth the good seed is the Son of Man.** V. 38. **The field is the world. The good seed are the children of the Kingdom; but the tares are the children of the Wicked One.** V. 39. **The enemy that sowed them is the devil. The harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the angels.** V. 40. **As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire, so shall it be in the end of this world.** V. 41. **The Son of Man shall send forth His angels, and they shall gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity;** v. 42. **and shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.** V. 43. **Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of**

107) Luther, 12, 1248. 1249.

their Father. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear. The narrative reveals a respectful intimacy on the part of the disciples. When Jesus had returned home, they did not hesitate to ask for an explanation, in order that the meaning of the parable might be altogether clear to them. He was patient with them. He interpreted to them one point after another. The wide world is the harvest-field of the Son of Man, who here represents Himself as the Lord of the Church. His seed are the believers; the unbelievers are the children of the devil. At the time of harvest their unbelief will become apparent, though they have skilfully hidden it under a semblance of piety. They are called offenders that hinder the development of the good grain; they are guilty of behavior contrary to law, of a deliberate ignoring of the law. These facts should not be a matter of surprise to the Christians. "Christ not only tells us about this, but also indicates the reason where such rubbish comes from, that in the Church where the true seed is sown, that is, the Word of God is preached in its truth and purity, there are still so many noxious weeds, so many hypocrites and false Christians. But He indicates the reason to warn us against the offense, which otherwise scandalizes the whole world and causes her to say that nothing good comes from the preaching of the Gospel. . . . Such is not the fault of the doctrine, which is pure and wholesome; neither is it the preachers' fault, who would like to see, and apply all diligence to have, the people become more pious. But it is the enemy's, the devil's, fault; he does like a wicked farmer or neighbor: When people sleep and are not thinking of harm, he does not sleep, but comes and sows tares in the field. That is the point which is brought out also in the parable before this: He takes hold of the hearts that they pay no attention to the Word, and thus day by day are farther removed from it, and let the devil lead and drive them as he will, into all manner of sin and shame." 108)

On the Day of Judgment the sifting will take place: The false Christians will receive their sentence and be condemned to suffer the tortures of hell-fire, where wailing and gnashing of teeth will be their lot. But those whom Christ has declared righteous, who are righteous in His eyes through the merits of the Savior whom they have accepted, — they will receive the reward of mercy. Their glory will be a shining, visible brightness, as of the sun. And they will have the full realization that God is their true Father in Jesus Christ, through whom they are justified in His sight and have received the adoption of sons. It is a matter of earnest, prayerful anticipation.

Parable of the treasure: V. 44. **Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which, when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field.** Jesus is here not concerned about the moral aspect of the act, if, indeed, this comes into consideration here. It is a story which finds its parallel often enough, as in the discovery of a vein of coal or of the ore of some precious metal. In this case the treasure had been deliberately hidden or buried. By chance or by design a man finds this treasure. Realizing its great value, he carefully covers over once more what he has discovered. Hardly able to contain himself for joy over his lucky find, he goes and sells all his property and buys that same piece of land. A lively effect in the telling! The salvation taught in the Gospel is like such a rich treasure, like a hidden mine whose veins run out in all directions in Holy Scriptures, a treasure of inestimable value. "The point of the parable is that the kingdom of heaven outweighs in value all else, and that the man who understands this will with pleasure part with all."

Parable of the pearl: V. 45. **Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant man, seeking goodly pearls;** v. 46. **who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it.** Knowing that a perfect pearl, of large size, of regular spherical shape, of even luster, would far surpass in value hundreds of small, imperfect pearls, this merchant, an expert in his line, set out to seek, and, if possible, to find, such a rare valuable. Having found one which seemed to him exceedingly precious, he risked his all, stripped himself of all his possessions in the one great venture of his life. The glory and beauty of God's mercy in the Gospel is so great and precious that all else sinks into insignificance beside it. The pearl of the Christians is the greatest treasure in the kingdom of God, the salvation in Christ. He who has learned to know this priceless gift will gladly renounce all goods, joys, and delights of this world, and consider all human wisdom and righteousness as loss, in order to gain Christ.

Parable of the net: V. 47. **Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a net that was cast into the sea, and gathered of every kind;** v. 48. **which, when it was full, they drew to shore, and sat down, and gathered the good into vessels, but cast the bad away.** V. 49. **So shall it be at the end of the world: The angels shall come forth and sever the wicked from among the just,** v. 50. **and shall cast them into the furnace of fire; there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.** This parable offers a picture with which the disciples were very familiar. A large net, as used for deep-sea fishing, is cast into the sea and compasses a great number of fish of various kinds, good and bad, edible and unwholesome. Although the entire netful is drawn to the shore, the value of the catch is in the good fish, the rest being separated by a careful sorting and thrown away. They are not really counted as belonging to the catch.

108) Luther, quoted in Stoeckhardt, *Biblische Geschichte des Neuen Testaments*, 64.

The kingdom of heaven, in the form in which it appears here on earth, is like such a net. The working of the Gospel-preaching results in an outward collection of such as are really members of the Kingdom and such as merely bear the semblance of such membership, but have not accepted the Gospel. The latter add to the bulk, but do not belong to the essence. On the last day the separation will take place, and the sorting will result in the eternal condemnation of those that were merely feigning membership, who care nothing for faith and salvation.

Conclusion of the parables: V. 51. **Jesus saith unto them, Have ye understood all these things? They say unto Him, Yea, Lord.** V. 52. **Then said He unto them, Therefore every scribe which is instructed unto the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is an householder, which bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old.** With the aid of the instruction which Christ had previously given them, the disciples were able to some extent to follow His parabolic sayings and draw the right conclusions, to realize the importance of their proper application. Pleased with this evidence of understanding on their part, He gives them some more instruction pertaining especially to their future work. Every transcriber and interpreter of the sacred Scriptures, in this connection every Christian teacher, taught of God in the mysteries of the Gospel of Christ, because he is a pupil of the kingdom of heaven and a disciple of Jesus, is able freely to distribute from the treasure entrusted to him. He will be able to use old, familiar facts, types, and doctrines to illustrate the truths of the Kingdom. He will present the old Gospel in a new dress, applying it to the conditions and times in which he is working, throwing the spotlight of a new understanding, of a more thorough interpretation on passages which may have become familiar by constant repetition. As he himself grows in knowledge, so he aids his hearers to grow in the grace and the knowledge of Jesus Christ, their Savior.

A Visit to Nazareth. Matt. 13, 53—58.

V. 53. **And it came to pass that when Jesus had finished these parables, He departed thence.** V. 54. **And when He was come into His own country, He taught them in their synagog, insomuch that they were astonished and said, Whence hath this man this wisdom and these mighty works?** V. 55. **Is not this the carpenter's son? Is not His mother called Mary? and His brethren, James, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas?** V. 56. **And His sisters, are they not all with us? Whence, then, hath this man all these things?** Jesus now closed this series of parables. For a time at least His disciples would be kept busy digesting the great spiritual truths which He had made known unto them. He went away from Capernaum; literally, removed Himself thence. Coming to His old home, Nazareth, He taught His former neighbors in their synagog. This was undoubtedly a second visit, different from that spoken of Luke 6, 16—30. But the results differed little from that time. At first His hearers were almost stupefied with amazement; they wondered at His wisdom, at His powers, at His ability to perform miracles. But on second thought they remember His youth in their midst. He is nothing but the son of a carpenter, a worker in wood. We know all the members of His family. The text here points very strongly both to natural brothers and sisters of the Lord. "Whence, then": an expression of contempt; they thought they knew His whole bringing-up. They evidently did not realize that they were condemning their own town and its schools in disparaging the worth of a native son: He certainly could not have gotten all that from us!

Christ's behavior in this crisis: V. 57. **And they were offended in Him. But Jesus said unto them, A prophet is not without honor, save in his own country and in his own house.** V. 58. **And He did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief.** The offense which they took discredited only themselves; their pride and their envy caused their own destruction. Christ therefore merely calls to their mind the proverbial saying as to a prophet's being without honor in his own home. Their unbelief grieved Him very deeply. He had made every effort in their behalf, but their rejection made further endeavors useless. The number of His miracles was greatly reduced, restricted to the few exceptional cases in which belief was evident. The unbelief and contempt of the people of Nazareth drove Jesus out of their midst; they did not recognize God's visitation of grace.

Summary. *Christ teaches the people, but especially His disciples, by means of the parables of the fourfold soil, of the wheat and the tares, of the grain of mustard seed, of the hidden treasure, of the pearl of great price, of the net with fish, and of the householder, and makes a visit to Nazareth, where He is rejected.*

CHAPTER 14.

The Death of John the Baptist. Matt. 14, 1—12.

The fame of Jesus reaches Herod: V. 1. **At that time Herod the tetrarch heard of the fame of Jesus,** v. 2. **and said unto his servants, This is John the Baptist; he is risen from the dead, and therefore mighty works do show forth themselves in him.** Herod Antipas, son of Herod the Great, was tetrarch of Galilee and Perea until 39 A. D. In am-

bition, political sagacity, and love of splendor he equaled his father. The new city of Tiberias on the Sea of Galilee was a monument of his luxurious tastes. At that time the tidings of Jesus reached the royal palace. Herod had been so busy with his political schemes at Rome, with his adulterous pleasures, and with his ambitious plans in general, that he had paid little attention to his country. Just now, however, he seems to have made Tiberias his residence for some time, and so he heard of Jesus, about whom the whole country was speaking. He immediately draws the conclusion that it must be John the Baptist resurrected who was performing such extraordinary miracles. Evidently the conscience of Herod was bothering him on account of the murder of John the Baptist, of which he was guilty.

The story of John's imprisonment: V. 3. **For Herod had laid hold on John, and bound him, and put him in prison, for Herodias' sake, his brother Philip's wife.** V. 4. **For John said unto him, It is not lawful for thee to have her.** V. 5. **And when he would have put him to death, he feared the multitude, because they counted him as a prophet.** A laconic account of sordid baseness! Herod had been legally married to the daughter of Aretas, king of Arabia. And Herodias, his niece, daughter of Aristobulus and Berenice, had been married to Philip, the brother of Herod Antipas. But Herod rejected his lawful wife and persuaded Herodias to leave her husband and live with him in an adulterous union, to which the ambitious libertine readily assented. She brought with her a daughter by legal marriage, Salome, who equaled her mother in shamelessness. John had not hesitated about taking Herod to task on account of his heinous sin. The adulterous ruler may have felt the justice of the rebuke, and might have been willing to overlook the frankness of the intrepid preacher. But Herodias resented the reflection upon her, all the more since she must admit the implication. For her sake Herod caused John to be seized, bound, and cast into prison. In the mean time, he was forced to meet the army of Aretas, who took bloody revenge upon Herod for the insult inflicted upon his daughter. If the Romans had not interfered, Herod might have paid dearly for his immoral indulgence. As it was, he was in a quandary, undecided whether he should put John to death, as Herodias urged, or set him free, because the people believed him to be a prophet, and Herod himself was rather deeply affected by John's preaching, Mark 6, 20. Whenever he came to Machaerus, the case came up anew to trouble him.

The birthday feast: V. 6. **But when Herod's birthday was kept, the daughter of Herodias danced before them, and pleased Herod.** V. 7. **Whereupon he promised with an oath to give her whatsoever she would ask.** V. 8. **And she, being before instructed of her mother, said, Give me here John Baptist's head in a charger.** There was a great birthday celebration, with much luxury and costly show, the highest military and civil authorities and the most prominent citizens of the country having been invited. There was much eating and drinking, and various forms of entertainment, after the Oriental custom. The feast was nearing its close, most of the guests were probably in a state of half-intoxication, the excitement of revelry had risen to the greatest height, when a feature not on the program was introduced by the cunning Herodias with the aim of carrying out her design. Her daughter Salome suddenly appeared in the midst of the festive assembly. Leaping into the middle of the hall, she performed a dance, a lascivious performance calculated to incite the passions. Herod and his guests broke out into wild rounds of applause. And, carried away by the sensual appeal of the dance, Herod made ready to reward the princess handsomely, backing up his first offer with an oath to give her whatever she might ask. Then was the scheme revealed; for the girl had been instructed, or rather induced, instigated, impelled, brought up to that point by her mother's precepts, and so made her appalling request. Here, in the very place of her recent indecent exhibition, she demanded, on a large serving-platter, the head of John the Baptist. Thus the vindictive persecution of Herodias reached its climax. "Thus the hypocrites in our days also do; they murder the innocent, pretending, meanwhile, that it must be done because the people refuse to remain with the Christian Church. Very well: Persecute thou the Word of God, blaspheme His holy name and kill the innocent, and adorn thyself afterwards and say, I have done this for the sake of God's Word and name. Wilt thou know what thou art? Thou art a child of Herod; he is thy father." [109])

The reaction and its result: V. 9. **And the king was sorry; nevertheless for the oath's sake, and them which sat with him at meat, he commanded it to be given her.** V. 10. **And he sent, and beheaded John in the prison.** V. 11. **And his head was brought in a charger, and given to the damsel; and she brought it to her mother.** V. 12. **And his disciples came, and took up the body, and buried it, and went and told Jesus.** Although Herod, here called king by courtesy, was sorry, touched for a moment with regret, and because, for the once, he realized that he had been tricked, yet his foolish, rash, repeated oaths had been heard by the guests, and the cowardly tyrant feared their criticism. He yielded, with something like a sigh of relief. The adulterer became a murderer. And Herodias, no less guilty, could celebrate her triumph when her daughter brought her the head of John on the platter, as it had been cut off the body in prison. A gruesome sight, no less in the private room of the mother than in the banquet-hall. The young woman truly was a match for

109) Luther, 13, 2730.

her mother in depravity: Her indecent, sensual dance is paralleled by her cool acceptance of the horrible gift. The closing chapter of John's career: His disciples took the dead body and buried it, after which they notified Jesus, probably with the intention of warning Him.

The lessons of the story are evident. "Now this is the most important point, that we learn two things from John. The first is for the preachers. Whoever is in the office of preacher should not esteem his life dearly, but do the work of his calling, and freely, without dread, rebuke whatever is offensive. That is well-pleasing to God, and therewith, as we read in the prophet Ezekiel, every one saves his own soul; for else he must give account for the sins of those whom he does not rebuke, as he should do by reason of his office. . . . The other point is not only for preachers, but for all Christians, that we may learn especially from this example that God is not evilly inclined toward us, even though He permits us to be persecuted, to come under the cross, and to suffer all distress. . . . He that wants to be in the kingdom of Christ dare not be afraid of cross and death. For such is the testament of the Lord Christ, and He, Christ Himself, has entered thus into the Kingdom." 110)

The Feeding of the Five Thousand.

Matt. 14, 13—21.

V. 13. **When Jesus heard of it, He departed thence by ship into a desert place apart; and when the people had heard thereof, they followed Him on foot out of the cities.** News of death and disaster travels quickly. Herod returned from Machaerus to Tiberias. But the news of his atrocious deed had reached Galilee even before him. His conscience gave him no rest. For that reason he believed John the Baptist risen from the dead, appearing in the person of this Jesus. So he told his courtiers. Jesus, in the mean time, felt it necessary, for various reasons, to withdraw from the neighborhood of Capernaum. His own safety was hardly to be considered. He had never come into personal contact, had never entered into personal relations with Herod. But Christ was deeply moved by the news of John's death. He felt the need of being in a place by Himself for a while. The apostles also returned from their journey about this time, and they were in need of rest, Mark 6, 30. 31. And, finally, the excitement of the people over the death of John might easily have brought on a crisis, with disastrous results for His ministry. So He took ship with His disciples and escaped into a desert place in Gaulanitis, on the eastern shore of the lake, in the neighborhood of Bethsaida-Julias. But His rest was of short duration. His departure and the direction of His boat had been noticed. As the news spread, crowds gathered and followed along the seashore on foot, bearing the sick and infirm with them.

The kindness of Jesus: V. 14. **And Jesus went forth and saw a great multitude, and was moved with compassion toward them; and He healed their sick.** So eager were the crowds to come to Jesus that they actually outwent Him, Mark 6, 33, arriving at the eastern shore before His boat came to that point. When He was ready to disembark, a great multitude was assembled. The sight moved Him deeply; He was filled with extreme tenderness and concern, not only for the physical infirmities of the sick people who were thrust forward by their friends and relatives, but by the spiritual misery and want of all the members of the great assembly, of which very few, if any, were aware. For the time being, He was busy with the many sick people, whom He healed. It might be the entering wedge for a few words of spiritual healing, of which the Galileans stood in great need.

The threatening necessity: V. 15. **And when it was evening, His disciples came to Him, saying, This is a desert place, and the time is now passed; send the multitude away that they may go into the villages and buy themselves victuals.** In the excitement attending the healing, time sped away; late afternoon was there before they realized it, the sun was sinking over the lake when the disciples felt constrained to interfere. They were in an uninhabited country, not exactly a desert waste, but no towns in the immediate neighborhood. The time of day was far advanced, night even now was near. The people should be dismissed, summarily sent away into the nearest villages to buy food for themselves. The disciples seem more concerned about their own relief and rest for the Lord than about the needs of the multitude.

The miracle: V. 16. **But Jesus said unto them, They need not depart; give ye them to eat.** V. 17. **And they say unto Him, We have here but five loaves and two fishes.** V. 18. **He said, Bring them hither to Me.** V. 19. **And He commanded the multitude to sit down on the grass, and took the five loaves and the two fishes, and looking up to heaven, He blessed, and brake, and gave the loaves to His disciples, and the disciples to the multitude.** V. 20. **And they did all eat and were filled; and they took up of the fragments that remained twelve basketfuls.** V. 21. **And they that had eaten were about five thousand men, beside women and children.** Matthew has only a very brief account of the events leading up to the miracle. The other evangelists bring out the dramatic incidents with great vividness. The evident distress of the disciples stood out in such contrast to the calm dignity of the Lord. There were the people, standing and sitting about on the meadow-like expanse near the shore of the lake. There was the little band of disciples, with Christ in their center, arguing with

110) Luther, 13, 1164. 1165.

great vehemence, telling Him what to do. And He coolly counters with the demand that they should provide the food for the multitude. He takes the opportunity of testing their faith in Himself and His power to help. They fail miserably. Philip, after some careful calculating, announces that they have not enough money to buy bread for all. Andrew supplies the information that there are but five loaves and two fishes available. Altogether, the helplessness of the disciples is almost ludicrous. But Christ now takes command of the situation. He gives the order that the multitude be seated on the grass of the meadow, in ranks, parties, or groups, by hundreds and fifties, to facilitate the distribution of the food.

Here the narrative becomes almost bare in its simplicity. Having taken the food and raised His eyes up to heaven, He pronounced the blessing upon the loaves and fishes. Then dividing them, He gave them to His disciples, who, in turn, distributed them to the multitude. Whether Jesus repeated the prayer of grace commonly used by the Jews: "Blessed art Thou, our God, King of the universe, who bringest bread out of the earth," is immaterial. It is sufficient to know that His blessing caused or accompanied the miracle, that the food multiplied under His hand, that they all ate, that they all had their fill, yea, more, that the fragments remaining overfilled twelve baskets of a very large size commonly used by the Jews. And all this, when the number of those that sat down to supper totaled five thousand, not including women and children.

Note: Food conservation has always been practised where Christians were told of this miracle and heard how careful Christ was about saving the fragments. "When our Lord thus through His blessing appears to us, then we should, as He here commands the apostles, gather the fragments, and not permit them to perish. For just as our reason in time of want only wants to figure and not believe, thus, when the blessing of God is there in abundance, there the world cannot and will not accommodate itself to it. Some use the blessing for luxury. . . . But such is not the meaning. God's blessing should be saved and not squandered, but kept for future want. . . . When the Lord bids us gather the fragments that remain, He does not want it understood as though we should be niggardly, but that thou shalt serve thy neighbor therewith in time of trouble, and that thou mayest the more easily help the poor people that are in need." 111)

Christ Walks on the Sea. Matt. 14, 22—36.

The beginning of the return voyage: V. 22. **And straightway Jesus constrained His disciples to get into a ship, and to go before Him unto the other side, while He sent the multitudes away.** The narrative implies unwillingness on the part of the disciples and a very strong urgency on the part of Christ. He had His reasons why He wished to remain behind alone, even though the disciples were afraid to venture back into Galilee without His protection. But His command prevailed. The disciples embarked with the purpose of crossing over to the western shore, while He remained to dismiss the people. This in itself may have been a difficult feat, since the excitement of the last days, followed by this manifest miracle had wrought them up to a high pitch.

Christ in prayer: V. 23. **And when He had sent the multitudes away, He went up into a mountain apart to pray; and when the evening was come, He was there alone.** A significant fact: Jesus, in the midst of the most distracting work, always found time for prayer, for presenting the great work He had taken upon Himself to His heavenly Father, and, in earnest supplication, asking for sustaining strength. He was a true man, who felt the need of seeking comfort and strength in intimate intercourse with God. Note also: He had sent the multitudes away; He was all alone on the mountain in the night and the solitude and the quiet, the best conditions for opening the heart to the heavenly Father.

The distress of the disciples: V. 24. **But the ship was now in the midst of the sea, tossed with waves; for the wind was contrary.** While Jesus remained behind on the shore to pray, the boat had gradually traversed a part of the way toward Capernaum, which they should have reached in a few hours at the most. But the wind was directly against them, and its strength was such as to agitate the water violently, making successful navigation extremely difficult. And all this Jesus knew and saw from the mountain. The eye of His omniscience penetrated the darkness of the night and watched over their frail craft, Mark 6, 48.

The miracle: V. 25. **And in the fourth watch of the night, Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea.** V. 26. **And when the disciples saw Him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, It is a spirit; and they cried out for fear.** V. 27. **But straightway Jesus spake unto them, saying, Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid.** Almost the entire night Jesus had spent in prayer, almost the entire night had His disciples struggled to reach the opposite shore. It was in the fourth and last watch of the night, between three and six in the morning, when the extreme darkness was dissolving into a gray dawn, that Jesus went out to them, walking along over the sea, on the water, as the evangelist says twice. The disciples, who were given to superstition, as were most of the Jews, were filled with the most extravagant fear, the dread of phantoms, ghosts, or spirits being very strong. They screamed for fear. But the calm voice of Jesus assures them. Thus the believers,

111) Luther, 13, 284. 285.

as Luther says, in the midst of their tribulation, do not believe that God is God, but think He is a ghost come to frighten them and to destroy them, surrounded, as they are, by their troubles. But He will always prove to be the gracious and merciful Lord.

Peter's impetuousness: V. 28. **And Peter answered Him and said, Lord, if it be Thou, bid me come unto Thee on the water.** V. 29. **And He said, Come. And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water to go to Jesus.** V. 30. **But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me.** V. 31. **And immediately Jesus stretched forth His hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?** Peter was always impetuous, quicker to act than to think. The voice of the Lord filled him with a courage that made him almost reckless. It was the joy of faith that made him cry out to the Lord. He wanted to be the first to grasp the Lord by the hand. And following the assuring invitation of Christ, he actually stepped out of the boat and walked on the water towards Jesus. As long as the eyes of his faith as well as his physical eyes were directed toward his Lord and Master, everything went well. But an unusually strong gust of wind, an exceptionally high wave, caused him to falter; his faith wavered; he began to sink. He no longer trusted in the word of assurance that had been given him. But in this emergency he cries to the Master, whom he still knows to be the Lord of the universe. And the patient kindness of Jesus saves him. He quickly caught him and held him above the water, not, however, without chiding him for his weakness of faith, which caused him to doubt at the critical moment. The Lord has patience with the weakness of those that are His own; He hears their crying; He holds them up even in the hour of death with His strong arm.

The effect of the miracle: V. 32. **And when they were come into the ship, the wind ceased.** V. 33. **Then they that were in the ship came and worshiped Him, saying, Of a truth Thou art the Son of God.** Christ is the supreme, the absolute Lord of the elements. In this case the wind ceased as soon as they had stepped into the boat, not by gradually abating, but by a sudden calm. No wonder that all that were in the boat, not only the disciples, but all the passengers, worshiped Him, freely giving Him the glory and honor as the Son of God. Thus was their faith gradually becoming stronger, thus were they growing in the knowledge of their Lord. And thus will all those grow that are in daily, intimate contact and conversation with Him in His Word, Ps. 107, 29. 30.

Safe arrival: V. 34. **And when they were gone over, they came into the land of Gennesaret.** V. 35. **And when the men of that place had knowledge of Him, they sent out into all that country round about, and brought unto Him all that were diseased,** v. 36. **and besought Him that they might only touch the hem of His garment; and as many as touched were made perfectly whole.** The distance from the shore still remaining was covered in a moment of time, John 6, 21. Both space and time are in the control of this Man, to whom has been given the fulness of divine power. They landed in the district of Gennesaret, a rich plain about four miles long and two broad. As soon as Jesus was recognized by some of the natives, they spread the news in all directions, and there was a repetition of former days. From all sides came such as brought to Him patients with every form and in every stage of disease. So fully were they convinced of His power to work miracles that they begged leave merely to touch the hem, or fringe, of His garment, which He wore according to Jewish custom; cp. chapter 9, 20. A mere passing touch they felt to be sufficient as He hurried by. And they are not disappointed, since the touch of faith brings an immediate, complete cure. Even so all those that rely upon the power of God in the Word, though they thus touch merely His garment's hem, shall find their sins forgiven through the merits of their Redeemer.

Summary. *Jesus, after hearing of the execution of John the Baptist, which the evangelist relates, crosses the Sea of Galilee, feeds five thousand, spends a large part of the night in prayer, walks on the sea, and performs miracles of healing in the district of Gennesaret.*

CHAPTER 15.

A Lesson Concerning Defilement.

Matt. 15, 1—20.

The Pharisees voice an objection: V. 1. **Then came to Jesus scribes and Pharisees, which were of Jerusalem, saying,** v. 2. **Why do Thy disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? for they wash not their hands when they eat bread.** Then, when the Pharisees were becoming so wrought up that they were holding councils to destroy Him. The movement was extending beyond their control, the popular enthusiasm was still growing. They were beginning to realize that they had no ordinary person to deal with. And so their hostility caused them to reenforce the Pharisees of Galilee with the learned men from the metropolis, for Jerusalem was the stronghold of the strictest legalism among the Jews. The purpose of the deputation was to discredit Jesus as being

careless and lax toward His disciples in His insistence upon keeping the regulations of the Jewish elders. Even during the Babylonian captivity, but especially since the time of Ezra, the interpretation or explanation of the Law, as made by the great rabbis of the Jews, had gradually grown into a large body of precepts, additional to the books of the Old Testament. This Mishna, as it was called, in later years received further additions in the so-called Gemara, all of which were incorporated in the Talmud, the religious book of the present-day Jews. These additional laws and precepts governed even the minutest details of every-day life, thus laying upon the average Jew an intolerable burden. The local rabbis and elders of the synagogs were supposed to teach all these precepts and insist upon their being observed most rigidly. A breach of these rabbinical rules was placed on a level with breaking the greatest moral laws. The tradition was as yet unwritten, it was the "law upon the lip," but its authority was the greater, the more remote in the past was the elder that had first spoken it. Note: Not the unhygienic or unesthetic feature of coming to meals with dirty hands is attacked. It is an act of monstrous impiety, a breaking of sacred religious traditions that the disciples were guilty of in the opinion of the Pharisees. For such an act they excommunicated people from the synagog. Their question implied also that Jesus was guilty for permitting such a sacrilege.

Christ's reply: V. 3. **But He answered and said unto them, Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition?** V. 4. **For God commanded, saying, Honor thy father and mother; and He that curseth father and mother, let him die the death.** V. 5. **But ye say, Whosoever shall say to his father or his mother, It is a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me; and honor not his father or his mother, he shall be free.** V. 6. **Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition.** The retort immediately places the issue in the proper light. Christ becomes the accuser, and the Pharisees and scribes the guilty. He says, in effect: Let your miserable charge stand, for the present; I cheerfully admit that the tradition of men is transgressed in our circle. But here is a far more serious matter. The choice is between the actual commands of God and the precepts of your teachers; your choice is the wrong one. The contrast is emphatic and clear-cut: The commandment of God — your tradition. God's Law, to which Jesus refers, was clear and unmistakable, Ex. 21, 17; Lev. 20, 9; Deut. 27, 16. Your demand is a mere saying of men. And it is to be condemned absolutely, since it results in setting aside the Law of God. The Pharisees permitted children in the home to say the word *corban*, Mark 7, 11, whereby they were supposed to absolve themselves from filial duties. The words literally read: He that says to his father or to his mother, Let it be a sacrifice what thou desirest of me as a help or benefit. This, according to tradition, excused children from helping their parents with money, goods, earnings, or any other material assistance. It implied that the children wanted to give such money or gift to God as a sacrifice, though very often even that was omitted. Christ's argument is: Even the honest pleading of previous obligation to God will not excuse a child for neglecting its duty to its parents, much less the ordinary careless, heartless, and profane manner in which this pretext was grasped. Thus were the Jewish teachers guilty before God, even according to the Old Testament, Prov. 28, 24. Thus were children dispensed from even the true works of love in this manner. "For the contention with the Pharisees really consisted in this, whether it be better to give presents to the parents or sacrifices to the priests. They said it was better to sacrifice. Thus they taught that the honor due to the parents was a mere ceremony, namely, to bow the head, to rise before them, and in outward behavior be respectful toward them. . . . *Corban*, that means a gift or sacrifice to God. As though a child would say: I should gladly give it to thee, but what shall I do? Even now it is not mine any more, but is given to God. Thus the name of God must be the cover for all shameful blasphemy and wickedness; as though God had taken from the father what the latter should receive from the son." 112) The Pharisees and scribes surely had invalidated, and were in the constant habit of setting aside, the commandment of God for their miserable tradition.

Christ substantiates His attack: V. 7. **Ye hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying,** v. 8. **This people draweth nigh unto Me with their mouth, and honoreth Me with their lips; but their heart is far from Me.** V. 9. **But in vain they do worship Me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.** He does not mince words; their sham and deceit, their shallow acting at religion, must be branded as such. What the Lord had spoken of the hypocrisy of the Jews in the time of Isaiah, chapter 29, 13; Ezek. 33, 31; Is. 1, 1—5, applies, in fullest measure, to the scribes and Pharisees. Mere lip-service is an abomination to the Lord. There is no faith, no real love in their hearts. Their supposed orthodoxy is a hallucination, their entire religion is vain. The injunctions which they laid upon men without Scriptural warrant resulted only in their own condemnation, Ps. 4, 2. "Out of these words of Christ thou mayest draw strong conclusions; first: Everything that is done without the Word of God is idolatry; secondly: Everything that is done according to the Word of God is true worship of God; also thirdly: All that is done without faith is sin; fourthly: All that is done in faith is a good work, for the Word and faith are in-

112) Luther, 7, 244. 246.

dissolubly connected, as in holy marriage. . . . We say also that the Pharisees were hypocrites and false pupils of Moses, because they held, if they only fulfilled the ceremonies outwardly, they would, for the sake of the mere work, obtain righteousness before God. This Moses truly did not want, but the ceremonies should be exercises of the pious, who previously were just by faith, and who thus kept the First Commandment before all. Furthermore, the reprobate people should, by external discipline, be held back and separated from the heathen. That is the meaning of Moses, if one understands him correctly." 113)

Christ appeals to the people: V. 10. **And He called the multitude and said unto them, Hear and understand:** v. 11. **Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man; but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man.** Publicly had He been attacked by the Pharisees, publicly He defended Himself. There is a definite connection of this parabolic saying with the matter in dispute. This they should note carefully and try to understand. His reference is to moral defilement, to uncleanness of the soul. His distinction is that physical cleanness or uncleanness does not affect the heart, but that moral pollution will stain both heart and character. "This fine and pleasing contrast, 'going in' and 'coming out,' is attractive. As though He would say: Why, what do they bother themselves with eating and drinking, or with that which enters into the mouth? Let them rather pay attention to that which goes out of the mouth. This we ought to watch. What goes into the mouth, that does not defile; but what goes out of the mouth, that defiles. Oh, those are detestable hypocrites, that are careful not to be defiled by those things that go into the mouth (which are God's creature); why do they not rather watch this which comes out of the mouth, which are works of the devil?" 114)

The Pharisees take offense: V. 12. **Then came His disciples and said unto Him, Knowest Thou that the Pharisees were offended after they heard this saying?** V. 13. **But He answered and said, Every plant which My heavenly Father hath not planted shall be rooted up.** V. 14. **Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch.** The disciples reported to the Lord the impression which His parable to the people had made on the Pharisees. The latter were highly scandalized and horrified, partly by the direct appeal to the multitude, partly by the point of the story, which they felt was directed against them. Jesus feels little concern about the state of their mind. All plants which God Himself has not planted, which are not growing in accordance with His will, with their roots in Him and living by faith in Him, are superfluous. They sink from the rank of cultivated plants to that of weeds that must be eradicated. God is most closely associated with them that are His own, but with them only. Every doctrine invented by man will not stand in His judgment. And every promoter of false doctrine will share in the uprooting and destroying of his false production. There is no compromise. Stay away from them, therefore, from the Pharisees and elders that attempt to force their man-made doctrines upon their hearers. They themselves are blind in spiritual matters. And they have blinded the majority of the people and will cause spiritual blindness in the case of all that follow their teaching. Thus the end of both will be destruction, moral, spiritual death.

Jesus explains the parable: V. 15. **Then answered Peter and said unto Him, Declare unto us this parable.** V. 16. **And Jesus said, Are ye also yet without understanding?** V. 17. **Do not ye yet understand that whatsoever entereth in at the mouth goeth into the belly, and is cast out into the draught?** V. 18. **But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart, and they defile the man.** V. 19. **For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies.** V. 20. **These are the things which defile a man; but to eat with unwashen hands defileth not a man.** Peter, in his impulsive way, although he might have acted as spokesman for the Twelve, wants the saying explained, which has enough of the symbolical in it to cause some difficulty. But the occasion itself furnished a clue, and Peter's plea for a clearing up of the dark saying is reproved by the Lord: Can it be that even ye are yet so dense in spiritual matters? after two years of instruction? He wants His disciples to use their enlightened intellect properly, and not make a mystery of a plain matter. It is a matter of common knowledge that the food which the body uses influences only the physical and mental life directly, and does not concern the heart and spirit. By the throwing out of the useless, the indigestible and undigested matter, the body is continually purged. This physical process does not defile a person, just as this result will not follow his eating with unwashed hands. But the opposite is true of the things, words, and deeds, which, coming out of the heart, pass from the body by way of the mouth. "The Savior implies that evil works first pass through the channel of an evil mouth, thus disclosing the evil state of the heart." 115) The words representing the thoughts and desires directed toward such sins, they are morally defiling, they reveal the pollution existing in the heart. The evil thoughts, the evil conversations and discussions of the heart, are made manifest in all kinds of actual sins, envyings, and murders, the breaking of the marriage tie and the

113) Luther, 7, 248. 254.
114) Luther, 7, 252.
115) Schaff, *Commentary, Matthew*, 278.

unauthorized assuming of relations permissible within holy wedlock only, the acquiring of the neighbor's property by wrong means, the defaming of the neighbor's good name, the speaking evil of God and man, — those are the things which cause defilement and are stains on heart and character, not the omission of a mere ceremonial custom. "He that wishes to wash his hands, let him wash them; he that does not want to wash his hands, let him desist therefrom: those matters have nothing to do with righteousness and with sin; I do not want sin or righteousness to consist in them. Therefore you must separate righteousness and sin from such precepts of men. I do not object to any one's washing himself; but I do object to it that some one for that reason should consider himself just and holy before God." 116)

The Syrophenician Woman.

Matt. 15, 21—28.

A journey to the North: V. 21. **Then Jesus went thence, and departed into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon.** The events of the last weeks and days had left Jesus weary in body and mind. The people were incessant in their attendance upon Him, expecting all manner of miracles of healing, though they cared little for the Gospel-message which He was preaching. The Pharisees were becoming more bitter in their hostility, stirring up hatred among the people and placing all manner of obstructions in His way. So Christ deliberately took a much-needed rest. He withdrew from the densely populated districts along the Sea of Galilee and journeyed into Upper Galilee, into the region of Phenicia near the large cities Tyre and Sidon. We have no information as to the duration and extent of this journey, and only one incident is narrated in the gospels.

The woman of Canaan: V. 22. **And, behold, a woman of Canaan came out of the same coasts, and cried unto Him, saying, Have mercy on me, O Lord, Thou Son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil.** Matthew calls her a woman of Canaan because she was an inhabitant of the ancient country of Canaan or a descendant of the former tribes of Canaan, Gen. 10, 15. Mark calls her a Syrophenician, chapter 7, 26, after the name of the country where she lived. This woman had heard of Jesus; for His fame had spread far beyond the boundaries of Galilee, especially along the caravan roads. She was acquainted also with the sacred books of the Jews, or at least with their hope of the Messiah. Under the Spirit's guidance she formed the right conclusion, as shown in her address to the Lord. She calls Him both Lord, acknowledging Him to be the Lord from on high, and Son of David, which was the name of the Messiah. Her petition was a prayer of faith also because she cried for mercy, deeply conscious of the misery of her soul, and of the fact that whatever help she might expect would be her share only out of merciful sympathy on the part of Jesus. Note also: In one of the most terrible afflictions that may fall to the lot of a mother, she turns to the Lord alone; a shining example!

Jesus makes a trial of her faith: V. 23. **But He answered her not a word. And His disciples came and besought Him, saying, Send her away, for she crieth after us.** V. 24. **But He answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel.** V. 25. **Then came she and worshiped Him, saying, Lord, help me.** V. 26. **But He answered and said, It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs.** V. 27. **And she said, Truth, Lord; yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table.** Here is an example of persistent, importunate pleading, not only in her own interest, to take away the anguish of her soul, but also for her daughter, who was suffering with a particularly severe form of demoniacal possession. But she received a decided shock of disappointment. At first the Lord paid absolutely no attention to her, but continued His journey as though He had not heard her. In the mean time she must have continued her clamoring without abating the least in fervor, for the disciples find themselves constrained to make intercession for her. Their tone is not exceptionally gracious. It implies that they would gladly be rid of her, that her persistent crying was annoying them. As usual, they did not come out of the test with flying colors. In a harsh manner, implying that they had better see to their own affairs, Jesus tells them that His special mission concerns the Jewish people only. That was the second rebuff. Of a truth, Luther says, Christ nowhere in all the gospels is painted as being so hard as here.

The disciples are discouraged and hold their peace, but the woman redoubles her efforts. She has set her faith on the word and works of this man, whom she steadfastly believes to be the Messiah; and she refuses to give up. With new courage she flings herself in His way, worshiping Him as the Lord from heaven, and insisting that He must help, that He must grant her prayer. If prayer fails, if intercession fails, she is ready to storm heaven itself. Christ delivers His last blow by saying roughly, with the full force of His assumed unkindness: It isn't the proper thing, it shouldn't be done, to take the bread of the children and to throw it to the dogs. The implication was that the Gentile woman and all her family and people were not on a level with the Israelites, that they could be considered in the eyes of God only as dogs, while the Jews were His children. That was a stern judgment which the Lord rendered, in which there surely was not a glimmer of hope for the harassed mother. But the eyes of faith will see light where others find only Egyptian darkness. As Luther writes, there is more *yes*

116) Luther, 7, 259.

than *no* in Christ's speech: yea, nothing but *yes*, but very deep and hidden, and it seems nothing but *no*. There was not an absolute denial of her request, there was still room for an argument. And, besides, Christ had not compared her people and her family to the street-dogs, but to the house-dogs that live with their masters in the home. Instead, therefore, of turning away in hopeless discouragement, she turns to the attack: Yes, Lord, for also the house-dogs share in the meal of the children, though nothing but the crumbs fall to their lot. She had caught the Lord in His own argument, she had won a decided victory over Him. She is willing to be content with, yea, she demands as her right, the crumbs which the Jews were becoming tired of.

The victory of faith: V. 28. **Then Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, great is thy faith; be it unto thee even as thou wilt. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour.** Regardless of her birth and nationality, this woman was a member of God's people, Rom. 9, 7. 8; Gal. 4, 28. She was a child of God by faith in her Savior, the Son of David. Her faith had conquered the Lord. And as a reward of her faith her wish was granted. In that very hour her daughter was restored to complete health. "Thus God wants to do even now with us. When He has denied our prayer for so long a time, and has always answered us *no*, but we firmly cling to the *yes*, then it must finally he *yes* and not *no*. For His word will not lie: 'Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in My name, He will give it you.' . . . Thus this story is an especially fine example of true faith, that this must be exercised, and shall yet finally conquer and obtain all, if we follow this woman; for she will not let even the Lord take the *yes* out of her heart, that He be kind and would help." 117)

Christ Teaches and Feeds Four Thousand.

Matt. 15, 29—39.

The return to Galilee: V. 29. **And Jesus departed from thence, and came nigh unto the Sea of Galilee, and went up into a mountain, and sat down there.** After the healing of the Greek girl, Jesus continued His journey northward, and then turned east, along the boundaries of Coele-Syria, and into Gaulanitis, into the northern section of the region of Decapolis. From the neighborhood of Caesarea Philippi He turned southward, and thus finally returned to the eastern shore of the Sea of Galilee, in the middle of the region known as Decapolis. Here it was that He again ascended a mountain and sat down. It was His usual way of preparing for a long discussion with His disciples.

Healing the multitudes: V. 30. **And great multitudes came unto Him, having with them those that were lame, blind, dumb, maimed, and many others, and cast them down at Jesus' feet; and He healed them,** v. 31. **insomuch that the multitude wondered, when they saw the dumb to speak, the maimed to be whole, the lame to walk, and the blind to see; and they glorified the God of Israel.** No evidence of a hunger of the soul, no desire for spiritual enlightenment, only for healing the body. But Christ surely did not let this opportunity go by; He spoke to them of the one thing needful. But the multitudes came in endless procession, bearing their helpless relatives and friends, the lame, blind, dumb, maimed, or mutilated, whose members were dislocated or had been cut off, and a host of others. It was a repetition of previous occasions. They indicated their complete confidence in His power of healing by casting the sick people down at His feet. They had done their share, they knew He would do His. And His healing power went out once more upon those people of the border, half heathen, half Jewish, to their delighted wonder. All of the sick and crippled were restored to complete health, to the correct use of their members. And the multitudes gladly gave glory to the God of Israel, who had sent them this great Healer.

The great need of the people: V. 32. **Then Jesus called His disciples unto Him and said, I have compassion on the multitude, because they continue with Me now three days, and have nothing to eat; and I will not send them away fasting, lest they faint in the way.** V. 33. **And His disciples say unto Him, Whence should we have so much bread in the wilderness as to fill so great a multitude?** V. 34. **And Jesus said unto them, How many loaves have ye? And they said, Seven, and a few little fishes.** There was a certain faithfulness about the multitudes which caused the people to remain in the uninhabited places along the eastern shore with the Lord. Their wonder as one miracle was followed by another kept them alive and expectant. But in the mean time all the supplies which they might have brought along had been consumed, and there were indications of real distress and suffering among them. Christ's tender heart was again deeply touched. Calling His disciples together, He lays the matter before them, making them feel the responsibility for these hungry people. A beautiful word: And dismiss them hungry I will not. "Let us but learn to believe that we have the same Christ who takes an interest in us, even in our physical suffering, and always shows that these words: I have compassion on the poor people, are written in His heart with living letters; that He also would like us to know this and to hear the word of the Gospel in such a way as though He in this hour and daily were speaking to us, whenever we feel our trouble, yea, long before we ourselves begin to complain of it. For He is still, and will remain in eternity, the same Christ and has the same heart,

117) Luther, 13, 261. 262.

thoughts, and words toward us that He was and had at that time, and has never, neither yesterday or ever, become different, nor will He to-day or to-morrow become a different Christ." 118)

But the disciples had forgotten the miracles of a few short weeks before. In absolute helplessness they cast about for some way of meeting the emergency. They discuss ways and means of procuring and transporting a sufficient amount of food 'way out here into the meadows on the lake shore. The great size of the multitude appalls them. The Lord cuts the discussion short by His inquiry as to the amount of food available, and receives the answer.

The miracle: V. 35. **And He commanded the multitude to sit down on the ground.** V. 36. **And He took the seven loaves and the fishes, and gave thanks, and brake them, and gave to His disciples, and the disciples to the multitude.** V. 37. **And they did all eat and were filled; and they took up of the broken meat that was left, seven basketfuls.** V. 38. **And they that did eat were four thousand men, beside women and children.** V. 39. **And He sent away the multitude, and took ship, and came into the coasts of Magdala.** Christ now took the situation wholly in hand, disgusted, probably, with the denseness of His disciples. He had the crowds sit down in an orderly manner to facilitate the distribution of the food; He took the bread and the fishes, pronounced the blessing upon them, broke them, gave them to His disciples, who, in turn, distributed both bread and fishes to the people. After all had been fully satisfied, the remaining fragments filled seven baskets. They bear a different name here than in chapter 14, 20, either because they were made by a different process, or because they were exceptionally large containers to be carried on the back, or because Matthew gives them the name by which they were known among the people of that region, whose characteristic was predominantly Gentile. The number of people in the multitude is again recorded: four thousand, without women and children. Jesus now dismissed them, and crossed over the sea into the region called Magdala, which, as far as can be determined, seems to have bordered on the region of Gennesaret on the south, having the town of Dalmanutha as its metropolis.

Summary. *Jesus gives a lesson concerning defilement, heals the daughter of the Syrophenician woman, performs other acts of healing, and feeds four thousand men.*

118) Luther, quoted in *Stoeckhardt, Biblische Geschichte des Neuen Testaments*, 139. 140.

CHRIST'S SPHERE OF ACTIVITY IN HIS PROPHETIC OFFICE.

A good many unprejudiced, believing Bible-readers have struggled with a feeling of offended surprise at the words of Christ to the woman of Canaan: "I am not sent but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel," Matt. 15, 24. It may seem strange, also, that Christ commands His disciples: "Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not," Matt. 10, 5. 6. It is a matter of record, furthermore, that Jesus spent His ministry within the boundaries of Palestine, touching the adjacent heathen countries only by way of passing through quickly, as in the story told above.

Over against these facts there seems to stand the testimony of the prophets, whose predictions as to the sphere of Christ's activity are such as to cause one to feel that the entire earth is Christ's sphere of personal effort. The prophet says: "I will also give Thee for a light to the Gentiles," Is. 49, 6. "And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising," Is. 60, 3. "He will teach us of His ways," Is. 2, 3. "The nations shall be blessed in Him, and in Him shall they glory," Jer. 4, 2. "All nations whom Thou hast made shall worship before Thee," Ps. 86, 9.

The contradiction is only apparent, however. St. Paul rightly says: "Is He the God of the Jews only? Is He not also of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also," Rom. 3, 29. The solution is easy if we remember two points. In the first place, Christ, in the case of the woman of Canaan, speaks of His own personal work. So far as His person was concerned, His ministry was limited to His countrymen, the Jews. In the second place, His instructions to His disciples indicate that it was God's will that the work of the new covenant should begin at Jerusalem, Luke 24, 47. Throughout the New Testament this fact, that God wanted to make the people of His choice the recipients of the Gospel-message first among all nations, stands out very strongly.

But the work was not to be confined to the people of Judea or Palestine, Luke 24, 47; Acts 1, 8. Jesus Himself gave evidence of that. The first persons to give Him homage from outside of Bethlehem were the Magi from the East, Gentiles, by all accounts, Matt. 2, 1—12. He Himself praised the faith of the centurion of Capernaum, Matt. 8, 10. He converted the woman of Samaria and many of her townspeople, John 4. He was overcome by the faith of the Syrophenician woman, Matt. 15, 28. He predicted the coming of the Gentiles into the fold, Matt. 8, 11; Luke 13, 29. He, finally, gave to His disciples the great command to go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature, Matt. 28, 19; Mark 16, 15. All of which goes to show that God wanted His work to be carried out in an orderly way, according to a preconceived plan.

"Now He, the Light of the world, is indeed come for the salvation of the whole world, but for the establishment of the kingdom of light and life by the preaching of the Gospel and by the working of miracles, wherein the coming of the kingdom of heaven is indicated, He is sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers, Rom. 15, 8, in order that the Shepherd

of Israel might become the Shepherd of all nations in mercy. Salvation is of the Jews, John 4, 22, and Simeon's prophecy of the Savior of all people and of the Light of the Gentiles, to the glory of the people of Israel, must be fulfilled, Luke 2, 32. He says indeed: 'Other sheep I have, which are not of this fold; them also must I bring'; but the Prophet of Galilee would not be a teacher of the Gentiles, but the voice of His calling should issue only through the mouths of the apostles, after He had completed the redemption of the world, in order that all the dispersed that by faith in Him would become children of God, might be brought together, John 11, 52." 119)

119) Besser, *Bibelstunden, Matthaeus*, 446. 447.

CHAPTER 16.

The Demand for a Sign. Matt. 16, 1—4.

V. 1. The Pharisees also, with the Sadducees, came, and tempting, desired Him that He would show them a sign from heaven. Here is a combination showing how far unionistic tendencies may lead if the object is opposition to Christ: the Pharisees, legalists, with their unceasing harping upon the details of Law and tradition: and the Sadducees, rationalists, with their denial of large parts of the Old Testament and all those doctrines that did not suit their reason. At other times these two Jewish sects were at sword's points, but for the purpose of resisting Christ they gladly unite their forces. In order to tempt Him, they come, in a malicious, deceitful manner. In a haughty way they request, demand, a sign from heaven. In chapter 12, 38 they had not been so arrogant. Their bitterness toward Christ grew in the same measure as their inability to overcome Him. "Just as if the wonders which He had done hitherto were nothing at all, since they had been performed on earth only. As though they would say: Oh, these earthly miracles are nothing! If He would show that He was powerful in heaven, then one might believe Him. Not as though they had been willing even then to believe, but they in the mean time blaspheme these miracles in such a way, although they are far greater than those which they demanded from heaven. For to raise the dead, to give sight to the blind: that surpasses all signs which it is possible to show from heaven by as much as man, who is the likeness of God, surpasses heaven and all physical creatures, and eternal life the temporal creatures." 120)

Christ's reply: V. 2. **He answered and said unto them, When it is evening, ye say, It will be fair weather; for the sky is red.** V. 3. **And in the morning, It will be foul weather to-day; for the sky is red and lowering. O ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky; but can ye not discern the signs of the times?** Christ was deeply grieved over their duplicity, since they made their request sound reasonable before the people, as though they wanted to establish His Messiahship, whereas their real reason was blasphemy. Under no circumstances did they intend to believe on Him, Mark 8, 12. The Jews were careful observers of the weather. They knew very well the common signs indicating fair and foul weather. Constant and careful watching had taught them to regard a murky and lowering morning sky as a sure sign of an approaching rainstorm, while a red sunset caused them to expect fine weather for the next day. But — skill in observing the signs of the weather; dulness and foolishness in spiritual matters! They knew not the times of their visitation, Luke 19, 44. They did not recognize, and refused to accept, Jesus as the Messiah, in spite of the many signs and wonders He had done in their midst. And so the signs of His entire ministry, of His life and death, which were originally intended to invite them into the kingdom of God, would now serve to harden their hearts all the more, thus bringing about their damnation. The ability to judge, distinguish, in spiritual matters was blunted. A constant abuse of their spiritual powers and faculties had resulted in their being much like mechanical toys, or like actors that repeat their lines and make their proper gestures at the indicated places, without entering into the identity of the character whom they represent. "He says thus: Those signs of the sky ye understand; why understand ye not these signs which are done for your salvation, if ye believe, or for your perdition, if ye do not believe? For ye now have a pleasant evening, from which ye may have hope concerning a future salutary and bright day; upon this will follow a murky morning, on which ye may expect eternal damnation. For My signs, and this time of grace and the wrath to come, are not less plain, and shine as brightly as the sky itself with his evening and morning; if ye would but look into the prophets that prophesy of this time, and look at things properly which ye see. But ye permit yourselves to be moved neither through the promises of Scripture nor through things that have actually been done, and are only drowned in these temporal matters, whether happy or sad days will come. Therefore ye pay attention to nothing, and in the mean time ye still demand other signs." 121)

The refusal: V. 4. **A wicked and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign, and there shall no sign be given unto it but the sign of the Prophet Jonas. And He**

120) Luther, 7, 270. 271.

121) Luther, 7, 273.

left them and departed. As in the previous case, Matt. 12, 38. 39, Christ does not mince matters. He calls them an evil and adulterous brood, one whose hearts have turned from justice, righteousness, and goodness, and from the worship of the true God to vain imaginations, meaningless traditions, a proud self-righteousness. They are eager in their demand for a sign, but when the greatest sign of all, the resurrection of Christ after the type of the Prophet Jonas, will be set before them, they will harden their hearts. Even so the present generation in the world is wise in the matters of this world, but the signs of the times it cannot discern. That the Gospel of Jesus Christ the Savior is the only agency that will set their hearts and minds aright is hidden from their eyes. The Lord realized the hopelessness of further argument in the case of these deceitful enemies. He pronounced judgment upon them by turning His back to them and abruptly departing, a very effective and, often, the only advisable way to deal with enemies of this type.

The Leaven of the Pharisees.

Matt. 16, 5—12.

V. 5. **And when His disciples were come to the other side, they had forgotten to take bread.** The departure of Jesus after His encounter with the Pharisees and Sadducees was hurried. From the neighborhood of Dalmanutha, on the western shore of the sea, He crossed over to the other side, probably into some section of Gaulanitis. His greatest concern was for His disciples, how they would behave under the present circumstances, how their faith would hold out against the schemes of the Pharisees. So absorbed was He in this problem that He paid no attention to the minor matters of the body. The fact that His disciples, in the excitement of the quick embarking, had forgotten, neglected, to take bread with them, did not enter His consciousness.

The warning and its understanding: V. 6. **Then Jesus said unto them, Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees.** V. 7. **And they reasoned among themselves, saying, It is because we have taken no bread.** It was on the trip across the lake that Jesus spoke to them, Mark 8, 14. They were worried on account of their neglect; the single loaf of bread in the boat was on their mind. The mention of leaven, therefore, was connected in their minds with bread, and it was bread which they lacked. They argued therefore that Jesus was reproaching them for not having a sufficient number of loaves with them in the boat. It was with them as with the Christians of all times: hard for them to get away from the care of the body! They neither marked that Jesus purposely used the word "leaven," nor did they notice the emphasis upon the "Pharisees and Sadducees." Christ's object had been to warn them, in the form of a parabolic saying, against the doctrine of both sects, against the outward work-righteousness of the Pharisees and against the conventional, worldly bearing of the Sadducees.

The reproof and explanation: V. 8. **Which when Jesus perceived, He said unto them, O ye of little faith, why reason ye among yourselves because ye have brought no bread?** V. 9. **Do ye not yet understand, neither remember the five loaves of the five thousand, and how many baskets ye took up?** V. 10. **Neither the seven loaves of the four thousand, and how many baskets ye took up?** V. 11. **How is it that ye do not understand that I speak it not to you concerning bread, that ye should beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees?** V. 12. **Then understood they how that He bade them not beware of the leaven of bread, but of the doctrine of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees.** Jesus could not help but notice their lack of understanding. Even if their conversation was carried on in voices too low for Him to hear, He read what went on in their minds. His reproach is sad, almost stern: He charges them with little understanding, with hardness of heart, Mark 8, 17. 18, with little faith. That they are concerned about, and gravely discuss, a question of bodily food, when dangers are confronting their faith! He challenges their understanding, their memory, in the matter of the feeding of the five thousand and, shortly after that, of the four thousand. He wants them to recall how many baskets of fragments they picked up in either case: Are ye still too dull to draw conclusions? The question of a sufficient supply of bread had in no way entered into the situation. It was a matter solely of their imagination and their care for the body that prompted them to think as they had. "Here we see that Christ deals in a most loving manner with those that do not tempt Him, but are ready, absolutely and simply to be instructed of Him. For, behold, how much patience He has with the ignorance of the apostles in the Word and with their weakness in the faith. He did not go away and leave them, as He did the Pharisees; but He bears and heals their foolishness in a most kindly manner and is obliged to explain Himself over against them as against children with clear words in regard to that which He had said, and accommodate Himself to their ability. And they also do not cast away the love, the trust, and the respect toward Him, but they, as true disciples, gladly bear His reproof and become better through it." 122) Their understanding having thus been opened, they were no longer at a loss as to the meaning of the word "leaven." As the yeast, or leaven, which is added to the meal, though it may be small in amount, yet exerts its power upon the whole mass, so it is with false doctrine. It may be an apparently small matter, a doubt as to

122) Luther, quoted in Stoeckhardt, *Biblische Geschichte des Neuen Testaments*, 141. 142.

the validity of a Scripture-passage, a false understanding of a fundamental truth; and the entire structure of faith is liable to be undermined. The disciples now understood that He warned them against the false doctrine of the Pharisees, including their hypocrisy, pride, envy, self-righteousness, and arrogance, and that of the Sadducees in denying the existence of the spiritual world, the immortality of the soul, the resurrection of the body, and the providence of God. "He reminded them that they must hold the Word and faith firmly against the doctrine of the Pharisees and Sadducees. As though He would say: Why are ye worried on account of the bread for the body? Strive to be concerned for the bread of the spirit, for the Word and faith, against false doctrine and faith. Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, that ye may not, through false teachers, be misled into the kingdom of the devil and error. For this true bread ye must be concerned." 123)

"Christ the Son of the Living God."

Matt. 16, 13—20.

V. 13. **When Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, He asked His disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?** V. 14. **And they said, Some say that Thou art John the Baptist; some, Elias; and others, Jeremias or one of the prophets.** A second time Christ made an excursion northwards, to the very boundary of Palestine, into the territory of Herod Philip, who had practically rebuilt this city and made it his residence. It had formerly been called Paneas, and is probably the ancient Leshem or Laish, Josh. 19, 47; Judg. 18, 7. The reasons for this journey were probably those of the preceding trip to the North, to get away, for a while, from the distractions of the active ministry, with its tedious and wearing vexations, and to gain time and opportunity for uninterrupted intercourse with the disciples. They needed a great deal of help in their faith, since the days of real temptations were drawing near. They must grow in Him and through Him in faith and firmness, lest the last great test find them unable to hold their own. While they were on their way into this region, Jesus, not so much for His own information as for the sake of testing the faith of His disciples, asks them the question: Whom do people take Me for? What do they find in Me? He applies the official title "Son of Man" to Himself, as distinguishing Him according to His person and His work. It appears that the bitter slanderings of the Pharisees had at least had so much effect that the belief in His Messiahship had gradually been suppressed among the common people. But they still held Him in high esteem. They either believed that one of the prophets, such as John the Baptist, Elijah, or Jeremiah, had been raised from the dead, or they held, according to Pharisaical example, that the soul and spirit of one of these prophets had come to new life in Jesus. Christ was indeed a prophet, Deut. 18, 15, and He was very properly called Elijah, Mal. 4, 5; however, in a far higher sense than these ignorant people thought. But the Lord's inquiry had a deeper purpose, namely, to get an express declaration of faith from His disciples, and to confirm and strengthen them in it.

The confession: V. 15. **He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am?** V. 16. **And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.** V. 17. **And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona; for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but My Father which is in heaven.** V. 18. **And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build My Church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.** Here was the time of decision, for a declaration of personal faith. "This was the decisive moment in which the separation of the New Testament Church from the Old Testament theocracy was to be made. The hour had come for the utterance of a distinct Christian confession." 124) The disciples met this test of their understanding and faith in a splendid manner. Simon Peter, impetuous, emotional, energetic, outspoken, gave an answer in the name of the apostles, as their spokesman, voicing, in a short declaration, their opinion and unanimous agreement: "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." This was not the sense which the Jewish traditional idea connected with the word Messiah, a mere deliverer from earthly bondage, but a concise and still comprehensive confession of the Christhood, the divinity, the deity of Jesus. It expressed their faith in Him as the promised Redeemer. It was a reply and correlate to Christ's "Son of Man" in verse 13. It was a decided, solemn, and deep declaration, spoken with emotion and a sense of the gravity of the circumstances. "Therefore the entire Apostolic Creed is included in these words: 'Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God'; namely, that He is the Son of God, the almighty Father, the Creator of heaven and earth, and that our Lord Jesus Christ was conceived of the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary, that He suffered for us, that He died and was raised from the dead, and sitteth at the right hand of God the Father, because He is Son, Judge, and Lord over all; that He distributes forgiveness of sins through the Holy Ghost, unto the resurrection and to eternal life." 125)

Jesus was highly pleased with this confession which Peter had made in the name of the apostles. He calls him happy, blessed, in the sense of possessing happiness as a given glory. Jesus was satisfied as to the quality of Peter's faith. He addresses him in a solemn manner:

123) Luther, 7, 276.

124) Schaff, *Commentary, Matthew*, 294.

125) Luther, 7, 281. 282.

Simon, the son of Jona. But He explains the blessedness by placing the credit where it properly belongs. For what Peter here had confessed as his faith was no vain, human illusion which flesh and blood, his own nature and reason, had revealed to him. It was a revelation of God Himself. The right knowledge of Jesus Christ, true faith, is God's work and gift. It is not a deceitful, human imagination, but divine certainty. Happy, blessed, is he that makes this confession the faith of his heart.

The Lord adds a promise which concerns the entire Church till the end of time. Solemnly addressing Peter, the spokesman of the Twelve, He tells him, with a fine play on words, that upon his rocklike confession He will build His Church. He does not say: On thee, but: "On this rock." The gist of the passage is: Peterlike faith in Jesus, expressed in the same bold manner, by open confession of the mouth, admits into the kingdom of heaven, into the Church of Jesus Christ. Or, as Luther expresses it: "On this rock, understand, not which thou art; for thy person would be too weak for such foundation; but upon the confession of faith which makes thee a rock, I will build my Church. This foundation can hold and is strong enough; the devil will not be able to throw it over or throw it down." 126) Against this Church, as it is built, and because it is built upon this rock, the gates of hell cannot prevail, all the powers of hell cannot conquer it. It is strong, enduring, so long as the faith in the Father and in Jesus Christ, His Son, our Redeemer, and in the Spirit, as giving this blessed certainty, reigns in it.

A special distinction: V. 19. **And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.** In recognition of his faith, as expressed in his confession, Christ confers on Peter and on all that believe the keys of the kingdom of heaven. The keys are an emblem of the power which admits into, or prevents any unauthorized person from entering into, a house. Christ, the Son of God, has the key of David, the power to lock and unlock the house or kingdom of God, Rev. 3, 7. He has earned for all sinners mercy and salvation. And this power and authority He gives to His believing disciples. Whosoever believes, has part in Christ and in all that Christ possesses. Whosoever believes is in the kingdom of heaven, has forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation, and may and shall impart also to others the treasures of the kingdom. "But this is their opinion, that the power of the keys, or the power of the bishops, according to the Gospel, is a power or commandment of God, to preach the Gospel, to remit and retain sins, and to administer Sacraments" (Augsburg Confession, Art. 28).

126) Stoeckhardt, *Biblische Geschichte des Neuen Testaments*, 144.

Christ's First Prophecy Concerning His Passion. Matt. 16, 21—28.

V. 21. **From that time forth began Jesus to show unto His disciples how that He must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day.** The disciples had made a splendid confession of their faith, proving conclusively that they had the right, saving knowledge concerning Jesus, their Redeemer. Christ therefore thought it the appropriate time to prepare them gradually for the great climax, the culmination of His work. They should now be able to bear the news. He began to show them, to give them explicit and detailed information. A very significant word: He *must* go to Jerusalem; a divine obligation was resting upon Him, it was a necessity which He had taken upon Himself to fulfil the will of His heavenly Father by His death for all mankind, Ps. 40, 8. The elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, twenty-four of each class of these forming the great Sanhedrin, or chief council of the Jews. That these enemies of His would succeed in putting Him to death, but that He would be raised on the third day: that was the sum and substance that Jesus attempted to make clear to the disciples from the Scriptures of the Old Testament.

Peter interferes: V. 22. **Then Peter took Him, and began to rebuke Him, saying, Be it far from Thee, Lord; this shall not be unto Thee.** V. 23. **But He turned and said unto Peter, Get thee behind Me, Satan; thou art an offense unto Me; for thou savorest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men.** Peter, the impulsive, probably filled with a feeling of satisfaction on account of the high praise which the Lord had bestowed upon him, laid his hand upon Jesus, or seized Him from behind, as though he would shelter Him by main force. At the same time, he began most emphatically to chide Christ: Far be it from Thee; may God avert it by all means! It was a well-meant, but altogether meddlesome interference with the business of Christ. He did not get very far, for Jesus, having turned around, gave him such a sharp rebuke as no other disciple ever got. A Satan, an adversary, He called him; He accused him of tempting Him to do wrong. Peter's thoughts were not in a line with God's will and work, but were solely the product of his own mind and heart. He was still concerned with his own problems only; he had not acquired the wider vision necessary in the kingdom of God; his thoughts were yet of the earth, earthly. "This is the meaning of Christ, in this serious matter, but directed against a dear apostle: Ah, Peter, thou didst answer correctly when I asked thee and all disciples, that I am Christ, the Son of the living God; but now, since thou hearest that I shall be crucified, thou understandest not the wonderful counsel of God, and art bothered with thy flesh and carnal

thoughts, and speakest without the revelation of the Father only thy own ideas, that is, foolish and carnal things. Therefore get thee behind Me; far be it from Me that I should prefer thy carnal wisdom to the will of the Father: much rather would I lose thee and all than that I, upon thy objection, should not obey My Father. Here thou art altogether a fool and dost not understand what is carried out through the Son of the living God, whom thou hast confessed." 127)

Taking the cross: V. 24. **Then said Jesus unto His disciples. If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.** V. 25. **For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; and whosoever will lose his life for My sake shall find it.** This is practically a repetition of Matt. 10, 38. What Christ had stated there He found necessary to emphasize here once more. Denial of self, of all self-righteousness, of all selfishness, is natural for a Christian that partakes of the spirit of Christ; taking up the cross, whatever of burden, whatever of trial and persecution and trouble and labor and peril and death the heavenly Father may see fit to impose — that is the cheerful burden of the Christian, because it means following Him. He who aims to find in this life, in this world, all that his heart desires, will, by that fact, lose the real life in and with Christ. But he who will cheerfully give up all that this life, this world, may offer and give him, for the sake of Jesus, his Savior, will find true, abounding, everlasting life in the Redeemer. "Therefore one must describe exactly what it means to take the cross upon one. To take the cross upon one means: for the sake of the Word and the faith voluntarily to take and to bear the hatred of the devil, of the world, of the flesh, of sin, and of death. Here it is not necessary to choose a cross. Just begin the first part of the life and deny thyself, that is, rebuke the righteousness of works, and confess the righteousness of faith, and immediately the other part will also be there, namely, the cross which thou then shalt take upon thyself, just as Christ took His upon Himself." 128)

True gain: V. 26. **For what is a man profited if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?** V. 27. **For the Son of Man shall come in the glory of His Father with His angels; and then He shall reward every man according to his works.** V. 28. **Verily I say unto you, There be some standing here which shall not taste of death till they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom.** Christ places the other alternative before His disciples. Supposing it to be possible that a man, by constant, unceasing labor, should gain the whole world; but, if in doing so, he forfeit his soul, his soul be made a forfeit, by the bargain, would it really be a gain? Could he take all his goods and give them as an exchange for his soul? Could he use them as a price to buy back the true life which he has lost with his soul? And there is not merely the negative disagreeable feature of losing the soul for this life, but there is the prospect of positive punishment. It will be, it is certain: The Son of Man will come, no longer in poverty and lowliness, as in the days of His earthly sojourn, but in the full glory of His Godhead, which He will exercise also according to His human nature. Accompanied by His angels, He will come to judgment, and He will give, give back, return, to every one according to his doing, as every person has given proof of the faith in his heart by the works of his hands. That will be the Judgment, which no one can escape, Matt. 25, 31—46. In the manner peculiar to prophets, Christ makes no distinction between the events near at hand and those afar off; for the eternal God, who inspires prophecy, has no time. Before Him all things are happening in the great *now*, in the present. Christ gives His disciples the assurance that some of them will not die, will not taste of the cup which yields death, until they see Him coming in His kingdom. This refers either to the glorification of Jesus through His death and resurrection, which introduced the actual beginning of His Church on earth, with the festival of Pentecost, or it points to the day when God began His judgment upon Jerusalem. That was the dawn of the day which will finally bring Jesus back in all His glory. Some of the disciples of Christ actually lived until long after the destruction of Jerusalem, thus becoming further living examples and proofs for the truth of Christ's words.

Summary. *Christ refuses the demand of the Pharisees for a sign, warns against the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees, hears the confession of His disciples, and rebukes Peter for interfering with His Messianic ministry.*

127) Luther, 7, 298. 299.
128) Luther, 7, 304.

THE PRIMACY OF PETER.

The doctrine of the primacy of Peter and of the supremacy of the popes, which is derived therefrom, is insisted upon by the Catholic theologians with the greatest vehemence. "From the very fact of the existence of a supreme head in the Jewish Church; from the fact that a head is always necessary for civil governments, for families, and corporations; from the fact, especially, that a visible head is essential to the maintenance of unity in the Church, while the absence of a head necessarily leads to anarchy, we are forced to conclude, even though positive evidence were wanting, that, in the establishment of His Church, it must have entered into the mind of the divine Lawgiver to place over it a primate invested with superior judicial powers. But have we any positive proof that Christ did appoint a supreme ruler over His

Church? To those, indeed, who read the Scriptures with the single eye of pure intention, the most abundant evidence of this fact is furnished. To my mind, the New Testament establishes no doctrine, unless it satisfies every candid reader that our Lord gave plenipotentiary powers to Peter to govern the whole Church." 129) The promise of the primacy, according to Catholic theologians, is found Matt. 16, 16—19, and its fulfilment John 21, 15—17, the word "sheep" there being applied to the pastors, and "lambs" to the lay people.

It would lead us too far afield, were we to follow up all the logical and historical inaccuracies contained in the one paragraph quoted above.130) We may say, however, in passing: Strange that this "single eye of pure intention" was lacking in the Church of the first centuries, that it took fully ten centuries for the Roman bishop to establish his supremacy, and that at no time the entire Church recognized him as the viceregent of Christ with plenipotentiary powers.

One thing is established beyond the shadow of a doubt, namely, that the Pope cannot base his primacy upon the text Matt. 16, 18. To refer the word "rock" to the person of Peter would mean indeed to call "our Lord's good grammar and common sense" into question. If He had intended to make Peter His viceroy here on earth, He would have said: Upon thee, or: Upon Peter. But He advisedly uses a word for rock which is employed throughout the entire New Testament to refer to Christ and His Word as the foundation of the Church. For the confession of Christ is His name, a part of His divine essence. "It cannot mean anything else than that Peter, being established himself upon the foundation that has been laid, was now qualified by his testimony to bear up the faith of future members of the Church, was now, and whenever he would repeat his witness for Christ in the future, a part of the foundation of the apostles, Eph. 2, 20, on which the entire Church rests, with Jesus Christ Himself the chief corner-stone." 131)

It is interesting to know, in this connection, that the passage in question was not always understood by the leaders of the Roman Church as referring to a supposed primacy of Peter. Without taking into account the many witnesses of the subapostolic age, we refer only to one manuscript. It is a Latin manuscript from Spain, dating back to the Presbyter Beatus, who lived in the eighth century. The text reads: "I say unto thee, Upon this rock shall be built by the Holy Spirit His disciples," and the comment written in the text: "Christians are called after Christ; therefore the Lord said, 'Upon this rock shall be built by the Holy Spirit His disciples,'" and, "This is the first church that was founded at the first by the Spirit upon the Rock, Christ." And in a remarkable discourse on "Peter the Rock" found at Mount Sinai a few decades ago, there is a most elaborate argument that the Church was founded, not upon Peter, but upon Christ the Rock.132)

To insist upon Matt. 16, 18, and omit all reference to Matt. 18, 18 and John 20, 22. 23, not to mention the many passages in which Christ is called the one and only rock-foundation of His Church, is to employ exegetical subtlety. Luther's words concerning our text will bear repetition: "As though He would say: Truly, thou hast hit upon it, for everything depends upon that; that is My Church which has this revelation that I am Christ, the Son of the living God. On this rock will I build My Church. . . . For I am the absolutely reliable and unconquerable Foundation of the Church, that is, of those who, like thee, believe and confess. For through Me they will overcome, in Me they will have peace, and be able to do all things. . . . But what need is there of many words? The Church must necessarily be based and built upon a living, eternal foundation, and upon such a rock as will continue with her unto the end of the world, and thus be a conqueror of hell. But Peter the apostle, aside from the fact that he was a sinful man, has died, just as did all the other saints, and he himself was built upon this Rock of the Church. Therefore this passage has nothing to do with the papal tyranny." 133)

"They cite against us certain passages, *viz.*, Matt. 16, 18. 19: 'Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build My Church'; also: 'I will give unto thee the keys'; also John 21, 15: 'Feed My sheep,' and some others. But since this entire controversy has been fully and accurately treated of elsewhere in the books of our theologians, and all things cannot be reviewed in this place, we refer to those writings, and wish them to be regarded as repeated. Yet we will briefly reply concerning the interpretation of the passages quoted. In all these passages Peter is the representative of the entire assembly of the apostles, as appears from the text itself. For Christ asks not Peter alone, but says: 'Whom do ye say that I am?' And what is here said in the singular number: 'I will give unto thee the keys; and whatsoever thou shalt bind,' etc., is elsewhere expressed in the plural, Matt. 18, 18: 'Whatsoever ye shall bind,' etc. And in John 20, 23: 'Whosesoever sins ye remit,' etc. These words testify that the keys are given alike to all the apostles, and that all the apostles are alike sent forth. In addition to this, it is necessary to confess that the keys pertain not to the person of a particular man, but to the Church, as many most clear and firm arguments testify. For Christ, speaking concerning the keys, Matt. 18, 19, adds: 'If two of you shall agree on earth,' etc. Therefore He grants the keys to the Church principally and immediately; just as also for this reason the Church has principally the right of calling. . . . Therefore it is necessary in these passages that Peter be the representative of the entire assembly of the apostles, and for this reason they do not ascribe any prerogative, or superiority, or lordship to Peter. As to the declaration: 'Upon this rock I will build My Church,' certainly the Church has not been built upon the

129) Gibbons, *The Faith of Our Fathers*, 121. 122.

130) A detailed account in *Syn.-Ber.*, Cal.- u. Nev.-Dist., 1913, 31—62.

131) *Theological Quarterly*, 13, 110; pp. 104 to 114.

132) Cobern, *The New Archeological Discoveries*, 197. 279.

133) Luther, 7, 285—287. Cp. 290. 291. 11, 2296—2305; 13, 1166—1181; 17, 1068—1090.

authority of man, but upon the ministry of the confession which Peter made, in which he proclaims that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. He accordingly addresses him as a minister: 'Upon this rock,' that is, upon this ministry. . . . Furthermore, the ministry of the New Testament is not bound to persons and places, as the Levitical ministry, but it is dispersed throughout the whole world, and is there where God gives His gifts, apostles, prophets, pastors, teachers; neither does this ministry avail on account of the authority of any person, but on account of the Word given by Christ. . . . Therefore the building of the Church is upon this rock of confession; this faith is the foundation of the Church." 134)

134) *Smalcald Articles*, quoted in *Theological Quarterly*, 13, 113. 114. Boehringer, *Die Kirche Jesu Christi und ihre Zeugen*, I: 4, 276—286.

CHAPTER 17.

The Transfiguration of Christ.

Matt. 17, 1—13.

V. 1. **And after six days, Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John, his brother, and bringeth them up into an high mountain apart,** v. 2. **and was transfigured before them; and His face did shine as the sun, and His raiment was white as the light.** Memorable, important days were those which Matthew fixes so carefully in the order of events, six days after the first specific announcement of Christ's passion; a turning-point in the ministry of Jesus. That Luke mentions eight days, chapter 9, 28, offers no difficulty. "That Luke says Jesus had taken those three apostles with Him after about eight days, but Matthew and Mark, that it happened after six days, that is not opposed to each other. For Matthew and Mark reckon the days that lie between, but Luke takes the last day as well, upon which Christ preached before these six days, as also the first day after the six days, on which the transfiguration took place, in addition." 135) For Matthew it was the exact recollection of a strictly historical incident. While all the disciples undoubtedly went with Christ to the foot of the mountain, — which various commentators have guessed to be either Mount Hermon, in the Anti-Lebanon range, just north of the boundary of Palestine, or Mount Panius, near Caesarea Philippi, or Mount Tabor, near Nazareth, — only the three men that were His favored disciples, Peter, James, and John, were taken along to the top of the mountain. They were probably those upon whose understanding and sympathy He could rely. They were to become the witnesses of His glory before the whole world, 2 Pet. 1, 16—18.

A most peculiar, miraculous phenomenon: While Jesus was praying, He was transfigured, transformed, before them, His physical body being transfused and glorified with spirituality, a foretaste of His future glorification. Not only did His face shine like the sun itself, with a luster not of this earth, but His raiment became as white-glistening as snow, as the essence of light itself, beyond the power of any fuller on earth to give them such pure spotlessness. All this was visible to them as they gazed in stupefied wonder. His divine glory, which He always bore in Himself, but which was usually hidden or manifested only occasionally in word and miracle, here transfused and shone through His outward form and person: an unsurpassed revelation of His glory before their eyes. It was an incontestable proof of the fact that He was truly the Son of God; it was visible evidence of His entering through suffering and death into His glory. "Therefore this appearance of Christ intends to show in deed and truth what Peter above, chapter 16, 16, has confessed: Jesus, the man born of the Virgin Mary, is Christ, the Son of the living God (Christ, however, signifies a king and priest, that is, a Lord over all things; and also a Mediator between God and men). Because He was destined to be preached through the whole world as such, for that reason He is shown to the three apostles as such, who should testify to what they had seen and heard." 136)

A further revelation: V. 3. **And, behold, there appeared unto them Moses and Elias, talking with Him.** V. 4. **Then answered Peter and said unto Jesus, Lord, it is good for us to be here; if Thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles; one for Thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias.** The evangelist indicates with the usual "Behold!" that this was not the least remarkable part of the scene. Note: Any attempt at weakening the importance of this passage by trying to explain it as a mere vision in a sleep and by doubting the possibility of a recognition of these men on the part of the disciples interferes with the simple, objective narrative of Matthew. How they knew the prophets is immaterial; they recognized, they knew them at once. Though throughout in that peculiar state of half-waking and half-sleeping, their senses were able to grasp and retain all the points of the picture before them. Moses, who died before the Lord, whose grave God alone knew, Deut. 34, 5. 6, and Elijah, whom God took up into heaven in a fiery chariot, 2 Kings 2, 11, actually were seen by them as they conversed with Jesus on His death, which He was soon to accomplish. Both of these prophets had not seen corruption, and they were speaking to the Lord, whose body could not see corruption. They were witnesses and representatives of the Old Covenant, one having given

135) Luther, 7, 321.

136) Luther, 7, 326.

the Law, the other having been zealous for the Law, but neither had been able to stop the transgression. Here was one greater than the Law who, by His perfect fulfilment of the Law, would redeem those that were under the Law. The glory of the phenomenon was too much for the disciples — they became dazed by its brilliance. Peter voiced the opinion of the others when he cried out: Lord, it is good for us to be in this place. He desired at once to build three tabernacles, one for Christ, one for Moses, one for Elijah, that they might continue there in glory. The underlying thought may have been that it would be so much more pleasant to stay here, where the glory of heaven had been brought down to them, than to go to Jerusalem and have Jesus enter upon the way of suffering.

The witness of the Father: V. 5. **While he yet spake, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them; and, behold, a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye Him.** While Peter was still filled with the ecstasy of the scene and describing the beauty of a continuance of the phenomenon, a bright cloud, a cloud of light, surrounded them. As at other times a dark cloud will obscure the light, so here the intense brightness of the cloud of glory hindered their vision; human eyes are not strong enough to endure the light from the throne of heaven. Here was the cloud of the New Testament covering both High Priest and altar of the New Covenant, Ex. 40, 24. The disciples had at least, up to that moment, been able to observe a few things, though their vision had not been very clear, but at this climax they are overcome. For the voice of the Father uttered almost the same words as at the baptism of Jesus: This is My Son, the Beloved One, in whom is My delight. It was a most solemn attestation of Jesus as the Messiah and Son of God, destined to sink into their hearts and minds forever. Him they should hear, to Him, in His Word, they should render unquestioned obedience. The time of the reign of the Law, as represented in Moses, and the time of mere prophecy, as represented in Elijah, was past; grace and truth, the Gospel, the Gospel glory, have come in and with Jesus Christ. No need to look for further visions and revelations; we have the Word of Jesus, the Word of salvation.

The conclusion of the phenomenon: V. 6. **And when the disciples heard it, they fell on their face and were sore afraid.** V. 7. **And Jesus came and touched them, and said, Arise, and be not afraid.** V. 8. **And when they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no man save Jesus only.** The divine voice, the voice of the pure and just God, was too much for the poor, sinful mortals, who, as long as they are clothed with this earthly body, cannot stand in His sight. In the intensity of their terror they fell to the ground upon their faces to hide themselves before Him whose eyes are like flames of fire. Jesus, ever kind, gentle, and sympathetic, stepped forward. In His touch was a world of understanding and cheering assurance. He urged them to arise and cast aside their fears. Thus strengthened, they took courage to lift up their eyes, and saw no one but only Jesus, as they had known Him for several years, in His former appearance, in the form of His real body, with no visible signs of the glory which had just been manifested in Him. A vision so great and wonderful is not now vouchsafed to men; but there is one way in which all may see Jesus, namely, in His Gospel, where we both hear Him speak and see His glory. And seeing, we shall believe, John 6, 40.

Christ's charge: V. 9. **And as they came down from the mountain, Jesus charged them, saying, Tell the vision to no man until the Son of Man be risen again from the dead.** On the way down, while they were still filled with the greatness of the manifestation, He gave them this emphatic injunction. To publish what they had seen, at this time, would only result in hindering the work of His ministry and thus of the Gospel. "As this transfiguration was intended to show forth the final abolition of the whole ceremonial law, it was necessary that a matter which could not fail to irritate the Jewish rulers and people should be kept secret, till Jesus had accomplished vision and prophecy by His death and resurrection." 137)

The question of the disciples: V. 10. **And His disciples asked Him, saying, Why, then, say the scribes that Elias must first come?** V. 11. **And Jesus answered and said unto them, Elias, truly, shall first come, and restore all things.** V. 12. **But I say unto you, That Elias is come already, and they knew him not, but have done unto him whatsoever they listed. Likewise shall also the Son of Man suffer of them.** V. 13. **Then the disciples understood that He spake unto them of John the Baptist.** The fact that they had seen the prophet Elijah in the vision on the mountain recalled to their minds the saying of the scribes, probably based on Mal. 4, 5, as to the coming of Elijah. Their understanding was that Elijah would reappear in person, settle the quarrels between the various Jewish schools, bring back the pot of manna and Aaron's rod, and sanctify the people by an extraordinary washing. Jesus concedes the correctness of the idea: Elijah, according to the prophecy, was indeed to come for the purpose of restoring everything among the Jews to its proper state, as the Lord wanted it to be. He was to prepare the way for the Lord Himself. But the Lord finds fault with the fact that the scribes and the Jewish people in general did not recognize the second Elijah as such, but did what they pleased with him. The leaders of the people rejected him, and the dissolute, adulter-

137) Clarke, *Commentary*, 5, 177.

ous tetrarch put him to death. He shared the fate of most prophets that place the fearless confession of truth above the concern for their own safety and welfare. From the rejection of His herald to the denial of the Messiah Himself is only a small step; and even in the same manner will they cause Him to suffer. This explanation was sufficient to open the eyes of the disciples; they understood that John the Baptist was the Elijah who was to come before the great and dreadful day of the Lord.

The Healing of a Lunatic. Matt. 17, 14—21.

The return to the people: V. 14. **And when they were come to the multitude, there came to Him a certain man, kneeling down to Him and saying,** v. 15. **Lord, have mercy on my son, for he is lunatic and sore vexed; for ofttimes he falleth into the fire and oft into the water.** V. 16. **And I brought him to Thy disciples, and they could not cure him.** While Jesus had been on the mountain with the three disciples overnight, a multitude had gathered at the foot of the mountain, where the other disciples were awaiting His return. The Lord found the people pressing about the center, where some of the scribes were disputing excitedly with His followers, Mark 9, 14. The crowds received Him with all signs of respect, and His attention was immediately directed to a certain man who rushed forward with urgent desire, kneeling at His feet, falling on his knees, and almost carrying Jesus over with the impetuousness of his anxiety for his son. He confesses Jesus as the Lord; he earnestly begs mercy at His hands, realizing that he is not worthy to receive the gift. For his son he pleads, who was a demoniac of a peculiar kind, suffering with a form of lunacy or epilepsy which caused the boy to cast himself, often into the fire, and often into the water. And here was a complication: The disciples had been unable to help him. He had actually gone to the trouble of consulting them, but it had been in vain: they were not able to heal him.

The rebuke and the cure: V. 17. **Then Jesus answered and said, O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I suffer you? Bring him hither to Me.** V. 18. **And Jesus rebuked the devil, and he departed out of him; and the child was cured from that very hour.** A cry of the utmost weariness, almost of impatience. It includes all those present: the disciples, because of their lack of understanding and the smallness of their faith; all the people, because they were slow of heart to believe Him to be the Messiah. Faithless they are, having either too small a faith or no faith at all; and perverted, corrupt, turned the wrong way, unwilling to heed and to follow the way He was pointing out to them, the way of salvation and sanctification. They were permitting themselves to be led astray. He was weary of it all, He longed to be delivered of the dulness, the stupidity, the perverseness of this generation. But He was not unkind or ungracious. His words were a rebuke, not the peevish exclamation of a disappointed man. He had the boy brought to Him, He saw the evidence of the demon's power, He made use of His divine power in earnestly rebuking the demon, and the result was a complete cure from that very hour. The devil may sometimes, by God's permission, torture the body by some sickness, incurable before men, but the souls of them that put their trust in Jesus are in His hands, safe against all the Evil One's attempts to possess them.

Christ explains the failure: V. 19. **Then came the disciples to Jesus apart and said, Why could not we cast him out?** V. 20. **And Jesus said unto them, Because of your unbelief; for verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard-seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place, and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you.** V. 21. **Howbeit, this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting.** After the healing of the demoniac, Jesus went into a house. And there, where they were by themselves, the disciples gain enough courage to ask Him in regard to their failure. The fact stood before them: They had not been able to cast him out. The question seems to imply that the experience was exceptional; in other cases they had not had this difficulty, Luke 10, 17. Jesus very frankly tells them the trouble. Their faith, their trust in God, had not been equal to the occasion; it had been too small to effect a cure in this instance. Probably the disciples, who formerly had cast out devils in the Lord's name and by His authority, had attempted to exorcise, trusting in their own strength. Not redeeming faith is meant here, of course, but a firm reliance in God's power and promises. For if such trusting faith is present, though it be as small as a single grain of mustard-seed by comparison, though its quantity represent the minimum of such trust, yet it could perform miracles as yet undreamed of by them, such as the moving of mountains. Nothing is impossible to such faith. If we have God's command and promise in our undertaking, then we should firmly rely upon His almighty strength, knowing that we shall be able to perform what He has given us to do. Cp. chap. 21, 21; Mark 11, 23. Things that seem impossible before men, undertakings that are frankly jeered at as dreams of visionaries, works of mercy or other projects in the Church that seemed hopeless from the start, have been carried out successfully because of a firm reliance in the justness of the cause and in the help of the Lord above. — The Lord adds finally, for the information of His disciples in other cases of this kind, that fasting and prayer are helpful in bringing about the desired result. The more difficult the question that confronts the Christian, the

more firmly must he cling to God's promises. Whether Satan be actually present in the form of a very malignant and baffling disease, or whether he attempt to hinder the work of Christ in His Church by all manner of obstructions, earnest, devout prayer is an ally that can be depended upon to secure the needed help from above, to put the enemy to flight, and to gain the day for the cause of Christ.

Christ Foretells His Passion and Pays the Temple-Tax. Matt. 17, 22—27.

V. 22. **And while they abode in Galilee, Jesus said unto them, The Son of Man shall be betrayed into the hands of men;** v. 23. **and they shall kill Him, and the third day He shall be raised again. And they were exceeding sorry.** It appears that Jesus now returned to Galilee from the locality of the transfiguration. The apostles also gathered themselves together unto Him; the Teacher and all His pupils were reunited. This was done quietly, without public demonstrations. The time of God's merciful visitation upon the people of Galilee was past. The great mass of them had not heard, had not been converted. But Jesus took all the more time for His disciples, to give them the information of which they stood in such sore need. Again He makes His announcement emphatic: It is surely coming to pass, it will happen without fail. He will be delivered up, according to the counsel of God, to be an atonement for the sins of the world. Into the hands of men He will be given, through them, as the representatives of all mankind, He will find His death. Thus it was written, and thus it must be done. It will not be an execution which will stand in the justice even of human courts, it will be deliberate murder. But He will not remain in death, He will not see corruption. He is the antitype of Jonah: on the third day He will be raised again from the grave; He will rise and show that the seal of God's approval has been placed upon His finished work. The disciples were again too dull to grasp the significance of the instruction in Christ's words. Above all was the comfort of the last words lost upon them. They were all greatly distressed and filled with much sorrow. They saw only death and darkness.

The question of the Temple-tax: V. 24. **And when they were come to Capernaum, they that received tribute money came to Peter and said, Doth not your Master pay tribute?** V. 25. **He saith, Yes. And when he was come into the house, Jesus prevented him, saying, What thinkest thou, Simon: of whom do the kings of the earth take custom or tribute, of their own children or of strangers?** V. 26. **Peter saith unto Him, Of strangers. Jesus saith unto him, Then are the children free.** Capernaum was still considered the home of Jesus, and here He returned for a brief visit. Here the receivers of the custom, the collectors of the Temple-tax, were making their rounds. In the Old Testament, Ex. 30, 13—16, every Jew above twenty had been taxed a half shekel annually for the support of the Sanctuary. This tax was renewed in the time following the exile, the money being paid in the nearest equivalent of the coins then in circulation. The *didrachma*, or double Attic *drachma*, was now the commonly accepted tax for the Temple. The collectors did not approach Jesus directly, but, knowing Peter from former days, they address their request to him. Peter, familiar with his Master's habits and certain that He had always paid His contribution as a member of the Jewish Church, answered in the affirmative. Jesus, according to His omniscience, knew of the conversation before Peter ever stepped into the house and before he had had an opportunity to speak of the matter. So He anticipated His disciple; literally, got ahead of him. He also has a question to propose by presenting a parallel case. He wants to know what is customary with the rulers of the world in demanding and accepting duties on merchandise and poll-tax. The question is put in a lively spirit: What think you? Are the children liable or strangers? From the answer of Peter, who naturally exempted the children, Jesus then drew His conclusion: Therefore free are the children. Jesus was a Son in His Father's house, in the Jewish Church and its Temple, and not a servant in another's, and therefore could claim, as His rightful property, the offerings of the Temple. God is King of the Temple-city, therefore His Son is free from Temple-tribute. "His meaning includes this: My dear Peter, I know that we are kings and children of kings. I am the King of kings, and no one has the right to exact the Temple-tax from us, but they should rather pay it to us. How is it, then, My dear Peter, that they demand the tax from thee, since thou art a king's son? What thinkest thou? Do they do right that they demand the tax of thee? But since Christ proposes this question in a general way, Peter also answers in a general way in his simplicity, when he says: Not the children, but others usually pay the tax, not knowing that Christ in His words had called him a king's son." 138) This thought may be emphasized still more strongly. The children of God by faith in Christ, Gal. 3, 26, the children of the New Testament, kings in their own right, Rev. 5, 10, are free in the best sense of the word, John 8, 36. They are no longer held in the yoke of any Old Testament ceremonial law, they, like their Master, are free from the precepts of Israel. Jesus thus makes a joyful declaration, which holds true for all times.

The miracle: V. 27. **Notwithstanding, lest we should offend them, go thou to the sea, and cast an hook, and take up the fish that first cometh up; and when thou hast opened his mouth, thou shalt find a piece**

138) Luther, 7, 336. 337.

of money; that take, and give unto them for Me and thee. The miracle is taken so absolutely for granted that its fulfilment is not even noted. Matthew simply puts down the command of Christ. Peter took his hook and line, went out to the lake, threw out the line, drew up the fish with the *stater* in his mouth, and paid this coin, which was equal to about 60 cents, or twice the Temple-tax, for himself and for his Master. Thus was it the Lord's will. Jesus might easily have obtained the small sum of money somewhere else. He might also have paid for them all, though the text does not indicate that they were all present. Jesus purposely wanted to gain the money for the payment of the Temple-tax by a striking miracle. He, the Lord of heaven and earth, who has the fishes in the sea, the silver and gold of the whole world, in His hand, humiliates Himself thus deeply and subjects Himself to the precepts of the Jews, in order not to give offense needlessly, and perhaps, to win some of the people for His kingdom. It is a lesson for all disciples of all times, that they do not give offense, that they do not abuse the power and the liberty which they have in Christ to the detriment of their neighbor, but be willing to accommodate themselves to the wishes, demands, customs, and precepts of men, wherever love dictates this course and it may be followed without offending against a command of God.[139] It might seem a small thing that Jesus and His followers would seem to despise the Temple, and disallow its claims, but a proper desire to live peaceably with all men, if possible, dictated His course and became a lesson for all time.

Summary. *Jesus is miraculously transfigured on a mountain, gives His disciples a lesson on the coming of Elijah, heals a lunatic demoniac, chides the apostles for the smallness of their faith, again foretells His passion, and pays the Temple-tax.*

139) Stoeckhardt, *Biblische Geschichte des Neuen Testaments*, 152.

CHAPTER 18.

The Greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven.

Matt. 18, 1—14.

A question of rank: V. 1. **At the same time came the disciples unto Jesus, saying, Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?** In the same hour in which the striking miracle with the Temple-tax had taken place. Only a small interval of time had elapsed since their return into the house. And on the way they had quarreled among themselves as to rank and degree in their own circle. Thus early was the devil of pride raising his ugly head in their midst. Although their discussion had been carried on secretly, Jesus knew of the quarrel and questioned them about it, Mark 9, 33. They state their supposed difficulty in the form of a query: Who, then, who, in your opinion, ought to be considered the greatest in the kingdom of heaven? Jesus had repeatedly tried to show them that His kingdom, strictly speaking, is not a visible, physical, temporal kingdom, but consists of His reigning in the hearts of His believers. But that idea was still too difficult for them to grasp. They want plain, concrete evidence.

The demonstration: V. 2. **And Jesus called a little child unto Him, and set him in the midst of them,** v. 3. **and said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.** V. 4. **Whosoever, therefore, shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven.** V. 5. **And whoso shall receive one such little child in My name, receiveth Me.** Christ determined to make His answer very plain, His demonstration very palpable. Calling to Him a little child, perhaps one of the household, He took him in His arms and embraced him, Mark 9, 36, reassured him by these signs of loving regard, and then let him stand in the very midst of the disciples. The little child furnishes the subject for a very impressive lesson with a very solemn introduction. Most emphatically He declares that they must be converted, turn around and head in the opposite direction. They had indeed accepted and confessed Jesus, but the thoughts which they just now voiced showed that they were still far from possessing that condition of mind and heart which is indispensable in a servant of Christ. Their faith could never last at that rate. As children they must become, in simplicity of faith, in unqualified acceptance of Bible-truths, in trusting humility. In the proper relation of a child toward his parents, all self-consciousness, all forwardness, all arrogance is absent. Instead, there is a simple, unswerving belief in the truthfulness, in the ability, and in the care of the parents. This same condition of mind and heart is necessary in disciples of Christ if they wish to enter into the kingdom of heaven. There must be no considering of honor and glory before men, no false ambition, no scheming for power, all this being contrary to the spirit of Jesus Christ. Do not think, as Luther says, about becoming great, but about becoming small. The elevation will come in due time, if you but practise humiliation first. To become humble as a little child, that is true greatness in the kingdom of heaven, not only to feign humility by symbolic acts and dresses, whose very unusualness makes them doubly conspicuous, for the latter may be the very

essence of pride. "As though He would say: I see that your carnal mind is not affected by mere words; therefore I present this child to you, in order that ye may afterward and always think of it. Behold, here is a child! Now tell Me whether it is prepared for a worldly or temporal kingdom, of which you undoubtedly dream. That would be a poor kingdom, yea, none at all, which would be ruled by this child. But now, as much as this child is prepared to rule a worldly kingdom, so foolish it is to think that My kingdom is of this world. For the kingdom which I begin is of such a nature that all worldly-wise understand much less of it than this child may understand of a worldly kingdom. Therefore the idea and the thought of a worldly kingdom must be laid aside entirely if ye want to speak of My kingdom. For My kingdom will be of such nature that ye must become children in it, that permit themselves to be ruled, but do not rule in their own person, just as this child in the worldly kingdom does not rule, but is ruled." 140) Jesus now turns the argument slightly, in order to emphasize the importance of properly appreciating the souls of children. Whosoever, every one that accepts, receives like a true father, with all the evidences of such regard, even a single little child of this kind in the name and for the sake of Jesus, receives the Lord Himself, in and with the child. Every one that, for love of Christ, shows such Christ-like kindness to poor, forsaken children, has the promise that he, in doing so, receives Christ Himself, and with Christ His Father in heaven, Mark 9, 37.

A warning: V. 6. **But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in Me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea.** V. 7. **Woe unto the world because of offenses! For it must needs be that offenses come; but woe to that man by whom the offense cometh!** Christ is now fairly launched upon a subject which is very near and dear to Him, because of His love for all the lowly and humble. He has in mind not only the little children, though they are His first consideration, but all the lowly and unassuming, the small ones in the kingdom of heaven, that believe on Him. They may not excel in great intellectual accomplishments, they may not stand out before others in those matters which are commonly accounted great in this world; they are simple, unpretentious Christians. But woe unto him that should offend one of these, that should lay a temptation before them in any form, that should lead them into sin, that should replace their simple faith by doubts regarding the Scriptures and their Savior. Many a Christian has been offended, scandalized, been led into doubt, and thus to misbelief and despair by the bantering, frivolous tone employed by such as pretend great learning, whenever they refer to the Bible and the way of redemption. Christ speaks with great feeling. He suggests a punishment which would approximately fit the crime, a fate which would be preferable to the transgression of offending in the manner shown by Him. Let a large millstone, of the kind used in mills driven by animals, be hung about the neck of such a one as contemplates so heinous a transgression, rather than that the offense be done. 141) The entire subject of offenses is extremely distasteful to Jesus. He pronounces a woe upon the world because of them, for a large part of actual sins committed are due to suggestions, temptations, deliberate attempts at leading astray, coming from without. It is true, indeed, that offenses will come, on account of the perverted heart and mind of natural man. God is not responsible for the evil, but the evil lives in the world since the fall of Adam. Out of the evil hearts proceed the sinful desires, and these break forth in sinful deeds, and so scandals are inevitable. They find their way into the midst of the external Church of God, every heretic claiming for himself the support of Scriptures. "Therefore one should learn to know that scoundrel, the devil, who ornaments and sells himself under the name of God. For all false teachers and heretics claim for themselves the name of God, as you see in the case of the Pope, the sacramentheretics, the Anabaptists, and all schismatics. But the Christians are not excused if they permit themselves to be led astray. For Christians should indeed be childlike, but in Christ, not outside of Christ. For Christ the Lord has warned them sufficiently against the false schismatics that would come and attempt to seduce them under the name of Christ." 142) Woe to that man through whom the scandal comes, that is guilty of causing other men to sin!

A further warning: V. 8. **Wherefore, if thy hand or thy foot offend thee, cut them off and cast them from thee; it is better for thee to enter into life halt or maimed, rather than, having two hands or two feet, to be cast into everlasting fire.** V. 9. **And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out and cast it from thee; it is better for thee to enter into life with one eye, rather than, having two eyes, to be cast into hell-fire.** The subject upon which He here touches affects Jesus so deeply that He repeats His warning of the Sermon on the Mount, Matt. 5, 29. 30. Offenses will come, not only from without, but also from within, from one's own members. The hand, the foot, the eye present occasion for sinning. The law of sin is ever present in the organs of the body. To deny these members, to fight against every abuse of their God-given

140) Luther, 7, 340.

141) Cp. Luther, 7, 880—886.
142) Luther, 7, 890.

functions, to keep them in absolute control, that is the great concern of the disciple of Christ. That is not to be understood, as Luther says, that a person mutilate his body, but that he should keep his members in subjection with the help of the Holy Ghost, in true faith. The members must be cut off, that is, be subdued by the Spirit, in order that the hand, the eye, the feet do not perform what the sinful heart intends. For the end of him that yields to sin, that places his members into the willing service of sin, is everlasting fire, the fire of hell, where their worm will not die, neither will their fire be quenched, Mark 9, 43—48. Only he who, through the power of the Holy Ghost within him, keeps his body in subjection, does not permit sin to gain the ascendency, only he will retain faith and a good conscience, only he will save body and soul unto everlasting life.

Warning against arrogance: V. 10. **Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, That in heaven their angels do always behold the face of My Father which is in heaven.** V. 11. **For the Son of Man is come to save that which was lost.** The meek and lowly, including the children, are again His theme. See to it, He says, make it your business to watch, that you do not look down upon so much as one of these lowly, whose faith in Me is so simple, but sincere. The humbler the disciple, the surer his discipleship, the higher the value which God, the heavenly Father, places upon it. There are special angels delegated for their service, angels that are confirmed in the glory of heaven, that stand before God always, in the indescribable bliss of seeing His face. Note: There are good spirits, angels that continually taste the glories of heaven, that are confirmed in their possession of heaven. And these angels are delegated to the service of them that are God's, especially of those that are lowly and humble, like children in their faith. This fact ought to be taught to the children from their earliest childhood. "Thus I should train a child from his earliest youth that I say to him: Dear child, thou hast thine own angel; when thou prayest in the morning and in the evening, that angel will be with thee, will sit by thy bed, has on a white garment, will nurse thee, will rock and protect thee that the Evil One, the devil, cannot come to thee. Also, when thou cheerfully sayest the *Benedicite* and the *Gratias* at the table, thy angel will be with thee at the table, serve thee, protect and watch that no evil strike thee, and that the food will agree well with thee. If one would picture this to the children, they would learn from their youth and become used to it that the angels are with them; and that would serve not only for this purpose that the children will rely upon the protection of the angels, but also that they would become chaste and learn to dread the evil when they are alone, that they would think: Though our parents are not with us, yet the angels are there; they look upon us, that the Evil Spirit may show us no malice. This may be a childish sermon, but still good and necessary; and so necessary and also childish that it serves also us adults; for the angels are not only with the children, but also with us older people." 143) So highly does God value the children and the childlike in faith, so emphatically does He warn against contempt of them, which is sure to lead to offense of them. "Thus we let these words be a simple discourse, for we also are children and believers, if we remain in that, and then it is all the better. But if we be tempted with false doctrine, then it is said: Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for know ye that they belong to Me, therefore be sure not to despise them; as though He would say: Take heed, ye preachers, parents, . . . that ye do your share that the children learn to pray, believe, and know Christ. For that is your office, ye should educate these children for Me, I entrust them to you." 144) A final statement to bring home this truth: Everything that is lost, all people in the whole world that have incurred eternal damnation, none excepted, are embraced in His earnest intention and purpose of salvation. The desolate ruins of the fall of Adam are the place which the Redeemer visits with special love, for out of the ruins He wants to build for Himself a holy temple, out of living stones which have been made whole by the blood of His atonement.

Parable of the straying sheep: V. 12. **How think ye? If a man have an hundred sheep, and one of them be gone astray, doth he not leave the ninety and nine, and goeth into the mountains, and seeketh that which is gone astray?** V. 13. **And if so be that he find it, verily, I say unto you, he rejoiceth more of that sheep than of the ninety and nine which went not astray.** V. 14. **Even so it is not the will of your Father which is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish.** A most effective comparison! The picture is that of a mountain meadow, where the shepherd has taken his flock to give them the full benefit of the rich grass. But now it happens that one goes astray, leaving the richness of the meadow for an occasional hummock of bunch grass, exchanging the safety of the shepherd's protecting care for the uncertainty of the gullies and canyons, with the danger of rock-slides and bloodthirsty animals. For the shepherd that one sheep then becomes an object of concern. Leaving the other sheep behind him, he climbs up into the pathless mountains, and searches for the stray. And if he has the good fortune to see his toil rewarded, his joy over that one sheep will be greater than that over the others

143) Luther, 10, 1047. 1048.
144) Luther, 7, 907—909.

that have not felt the temptation to leave the meadow in search of adventures. Most solemnly Jesus emphasizes, most solemnly He states the conclusion: In the same manner it is not the object of the heavenly Father's will that even a single one of the lowly and humble disciples be lost, especially not on account of an offense given by a brother in the faith. The Father in heaven has only one will, the will to save; only one desire He has, to save by grace. The idea of a predestination to damnation is as ridiculous as it is blasphemous.

How to Deal with an Erring Brother.

Matt. 18, 15—22.

V. 15. **Moreover, if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone; if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother.** V. 16. **But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.** V. 17. **And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church. But if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican.** Note the connection: God does not want a single one to perish, to be lost, especially not the weak and erring, whose weakness might make them a comparatively easy prey in case they are tempted. The purpose of this entire passage is to show how a weak and erring brother or sister may be won back to Christ, even if it be a matter of some difficulty, of hard work. "Against thee": not referring mainly to personal offenses, but rather to sins about which one has a first-hand knowledge, which have drawn attention and are sure to offend Christ and the Christian religion. Sins they must be, not personal peculiarities. The latter may make a person unfit for some office in the Church and come into consideration only in that connection. But the Lord is concerned about the former only in this passage. "Christ now says: 'If thy brother sin against thee,' that is, if he bears himself thus that he publicly lives against God and His Word. For that means to sin against thee and all Christians, which is done against God's honor, or which is done and sinned against God, as when one despises God, blasphemes His Word, or sins against the Second Table, as in stealing, robbing, hurting, lying, and deceiving. Now if this comes to thee, if thou noticest it, then tell him his fault between him and thee. Thou shalt not publicly expose him on the market or where thou art, before everybody, but remember that he is still thy brother, therefore keep silence in the presence of others and go to him, take him alone before thee, in a kind manner admonish and rebuke him, say: This I have heard of thee, see that thou desist therefrom, lest God punish thee. Then it may well be that he will gladly hear thee and thou gain thy brother and bring him back to the right path." 145) The entire manner of speaking and acting must be kindly, but emphatic, yet dignified. The hatred of sin, but the love of the sinner, must be evident. Note also: It must be a brother, a fellow-Christian, for whom this work of love is done, 1 Cor. 5, 10. 11.

If this first attempt at serving the brother and gaining him back from his error should fail (and it may be a matter of Christian wisdom to repeat the private admonition several times), then the second measure must be adopted. A careful selection of these witnesses is also a matter of loving judgment. The injunction is based upon Deut. 19, 15. For a second time every effort should be made to have the erring one submit to the admonition. Patience and the object of gaining the erring brother must dictate every word, without, however, derogating from the dignity of the Word of God. Truth and righteousness must be upheld at all costs.

If, now, the full application of this measure also fail in spite of all efforts, in spite of all kindness and patience, then the last measure must be resorted to; there is no alternative. If the erring brother pays no attention to your admonition, if he shows no evidence of realizing his sin, if he refuses to be convinced in spite of clear passages of Scripture condemning his manner of acting, then the matter must be brought to the attention of the whole congregation. This is not the Church in its totality, but, according to common Jewish usage of the word, and also according to Christ's own explanation, verse 19, the local, visible congregation. And again shall appeal and admonition be employed with the object of winning the brother. The length of time is not prescribed and may vary in different cases, if only the erring one may be brought back to knowledge. But finally, if all efforts are of no avail, the condition of facts must be stated. The former brother must be declared to be as an heathen man and a publican, as one that is outside of the Christian Church, by his own fault and in spite of the most painstaking care and loving search.

The power of the congregation: V. 18. **Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.** V. 19. **Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of My Father which is in heaven.** V. 20. **For where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them.** Christ here fulfils the promise which He made to Peter and through him to all the apostles, chapter 16, 18. In a solemn declaration He gives to them the keys of heaven.

---

145) Luther, 7, 919. 920.

The entire congregation, of which He has just spoken as exercising the power of declaring an excommunication, has the power to bind and to loose, to forgive the sins of the penitent sinners unto them, but to retain the sins of the impenitent, so long as they do not repent. If this power is exercised in accordance with Christ's injunction and order, the sentence is valid before God in heaven. Every local congregation, even the smallest and poorest, has this peculiar church power. But it must never be forgotten that this power is given to edification and not to destruction, 2 Cor. 13, 10. It is intended to be a wonderful means for gaining poor sinners and for comforting the weak. "For when thy sins torment thee in thy conscience, thou mayest, in order to awaken a special joy, use the words of Christ, Matt. 18, 18: 'Whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.' If, therefore, thou hast been absolved by a servant of God or, if need be, by another pious Christian, and really art attentive to this promise of God, whereby He absolves thee from sins and receives thee into His grace, and if thou dost not run somewhere else: then thou hast found the safest haven of peace and of joy. For God does not lie and deceive; only believe thou steadfastly His promise." 146)

The fact that this power is actually vested in the Christian congregation, He explains: If two, the smallest number that can be considered a congregation, agree, consent together, come to a perfect agreement on any matter which they want to bring before God in prayer, their petition will receive the full attention of God. Such a full agreement can be wrought by the Holy Spirit only. "The Church may commence, continue, and be reformed with two individuals. The prayer of these two humble individuals on earth brings down the gracious answer of the Father who is in heaven, thereby attesting and confirming the character of the Church." 147) A significant hint: If at any time, it is especially necessary when the case of an erring brother is to be discussed that there be prayerful harmony among the brethren of the congregation, under the guidance of the Spirit. A last gracious promise: "Where," namely, wherever, "two or three," the minimum number composing a Christian society, are assembled, gathered as believers in Me, "there am I," now and always, till the end of time, "in the midst of them." This is true, above all, of the public profession of Christ and His Gospel, whether this be in church services or in other assemblies in which questions pertaining to His name and Word are discussed.

True forgiveness: V. 21. **Then came Peter to Him and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times?** V. 22. **Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times; but, Until seventy times seven.** The entire discourse had really concerned the question of dealing with an erring brother. The need of saving the brother, if there were any possibility of doing so without denying the truth and bringing dishonor upon God, had been emphasized. But Peter now wanted to know whether there is any limit to the number of times one should forgive a repentant brother. His question implies: Is there not reason for doubting the sincerity of repentance in such a case? Or is this not at least the final limit? Peter's estimate, he thought, was generous. But Christ's answer is staggering: "I say not unto thee, Until seven times." He would not even begin with such an insignificant sum, nor would He want to be tied down to any definite sum. No number would begin to show the greatness of forgiving love that should be found in the hearts of Christians; there is no limit to the number of times that we should forgive an erring brother and reinstate him in our esteem after a transgression on his part. Christ here speaks of forgiveness of sins, and here He has no limit, the seventy times seven evidently being in place of a number beyond petty calculation. Nothing but love and forgiveness shall be in the hearts of Christians.

Parable of the Unmerciful Servant.

Matt. 18, 23—35.

V. 23. **Therefore is the kingdom of heaven likened unto a certain king which would take account of his servants.** "Therefore," because unlimited forgiving in disposition and action is expected of disciples of Christ. This is an essential feature of the Church of Christ that this cheerful willingness be found. We have here an illustration both of the manner and of the extent of Christian forgiveness. A man, a king, a great monarch, one whose wealth and power seem limitless as measured by the standard of men, found it necessary, determined to hold a reckoning with his servants, with the men that were employed by him and had, in the course of time, contracted debts.

The staggering debt: V. 24. **And when he had begun to reckon, one was brought unto him which owed him ten thousand talents.** V. 25. **But forasmuch as he had not to pay, his lord commanded him to be sold, and his wife, and children, and all that he had, and payment to be made.** V. 26. **The servant, therefore, fell down and worshiped him, saying, Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all.** V. 27. **Then the lord of that servant was moved with compassion, and loosed him, and forgave him the debt.** With solemn emphasis the Lord says: Hardly had he begun to look over the accounts, the servants appearing before him one after the other with their certificates of debt, when a debtor of a

146) Luther, 12, 1952.
147) Schaff, *Commentary, Matthew*, 330.

thousand talents was brought forward. The exact sum of money represented by this weight of silver or gold cannot be accurately determined and is immaterial, since the text itself does not state whether the silver or the gold talent is meant. Figures varying from ten to more than three hundred million dollars have been given. The point of the story is that the sum was incalculably great, it staggered the imagination, and purposely so. The proceedings are simple: Since he had not to pay, the lord gave command that he and his wife and his children be sold as slaves, with all their possessions. Thus only could he hope to get a part of the debt paid. It was a hard, but just sentence, in full accord with the absolute power of an Oriental monarch over the lives and property of his subjects, Ex. 22, 3; Lev. 25, 39; 2 Kings 4, 1. The terror and distress of the condemned servant were naturally pitiful, the prospect of his being sold into slavery, perhaps to a hard and cruel master, seared his soul. Throwing himself down, therefore, crouching and almost groveling before the monarch in absolute submission and anxiety, he pleads for an extension of time; he promises to pay all. It was a promise beyond his ability to keep, but this fact did not even occur to him in the greatness of his distress. The king was deeply moved by this picture of terror and misery. He set that servant, whose pitiful plea had touched his heart, free from imprisonment, and the debt he canceled in its totality. The text implies also that he was continued in the service of the king, the latter assuming that the impression made would be a lasting one, that the lesson conveyed to him would never be forgotten.

The revolting lack of mercy: V. 28. **But the same servant went out and found one of his fellow-servants which owed him an hundred pence; and he laid hands on him, and took him by the throat, saying, Pay me that thou owest.** V. 29. **And his fellow-servant fell down at his feet and besought him, saying, Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all.** V. 30. **And he would not, but went and cast him into prison, till he should pay the debt.** Note the emphasis: Hardly had he left the presence of the king when this happened; it was the identical servant that had received such an immeasurable present of mercy. "He found," not accidentally, but after deliberate search; the malice of the deed brought out. The fellow-servant owed him but a hundred *denarii*, that is, at 16⅔ cents per *denarius*, less than seventeen dollars, an insignificant sum, one that could not even come into consideration beside the immense debt which the king had just canceled for him. But here is the height of brutality: Seizing him by the throat, he choked him, after the manner permitted a creditor according to Roman law. In the harshest possible form he threatens to bring him before the tribunal unless immediate payment be made. Taken by surprise and filled with fear, the fellow-servant fell down and implored and begged for extension of time. The sum being so small, he could easily find ways and means of paying, if his creditor would but have patience. But the latter had no intention of doing so, he wanted to wreak his vengeance upon the poor fellow. Going away, he cast him into prison until such a time as he would be able to make payment of the debt. It was the climax of harshness.

The result: V. 31. **So when his fellow-servants saw what was done, they were very sorry, and came and told unto their lord all that was done.** V. 32. **Then his lord, after that he had called him, said unto him, O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt because thou desiredst me.** V. 33. **Shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellow-servant, even as I had pity on thee?** V. 34. **And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, until he should pay all that was due unto him.** The treatment which had been accorded to their fellow-servant filled those that had witnessed the inhuman proceeding with deep sorrow and grief. Coming to their lord, they made a report of all that had happened. Cited into the presence of the king, the guilty one was speechless. He could not bring forth a single argument in dedense of his action. But the lord characterizes him and his treatment of his fellow-servant: Having received such a large measure of mercy upon his imploring pleading, would it not have been a matter of obligation to pass on this mercy to his own debtor? And so, since the king's wrath mounted high over such cruelty, the servant was delivered, not only to the keepers of the prison, but to the tormentors, with instructions that his life be made as miserable as possible, to atone, at least in part, for his total lack of humaneness, not to speak of decency and gratitude.

The application: V. 35. **So likewise shall My heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses.** Christ here opens up the meaning of the entire parable. He pictures the average person in his treatment of his fellow-man. "Such is man, so harsh and hard, when he walks otherwise than in a constant sense of forgiveness received from God. Ignorance or forgetfulness of his own guilt make him harsh, unforgiving, and cruel to others; or, at least, he is only hindered from being such by those weak defenses of natural character which may at any moment be broken down." 148) God is merciless to the merciless. He wants every person without exception to be ready at all times to forgive from

148) Trench, quoted in Schaff, *Commentary, Matthew*, 333.

the heart, without sham or lip pardon, not with a cruel: Forgive, but not forget. For we Christians are all servants of God, the heavenly King. And by nature we are unprofitable servants. We are guilty before the Lord on account of our thousandfold transgressions of the Law. Our debt before Him is so great that it staggers the imagination, as Luther suggests, that we can never hope to pay it off. We are therefore guilty of hell and damnation before Him. But now God has had mercy upon us for the sake of Jesus, who paid the debt of our sin. He has loosed us from the imprisonment we deserve and forgiven the debt. Therefore we have the obligation of gratitude resting upon us that we gladly forgive our fellow-men what they have sinned against us. Even if such a transgression be great in the sight of men, it cannot come into consideration in comparison with the debt which God has mercifully forgiven us. Any man, therefore, that is unmerciful, hardhearted, unforgiving toward his fellow-man, thereby denies and repudiates God's grace and mercy. His former debt is again charged to his account. The just anger of God will deliver him into a merciless judgment, from which there is no salvation, no delivery. "It is a fine, comforting Gospel, and sweet for the saddened consciences, since it has nothing but forgiveness of sins. But on the other hand, to the hard heads and to the stubborn it is a terrible judgment, and, especially, since the servant is not a heathen, but belongs under the Gospel and had faith. For since the lord has mercy upon him and forgives what he has done, he must undoubtedly be a Christian. Therefore this is not a punishment for the heathen, nor for the great mass that do not hear the Word of God, but for those that hear the Gospel with the ears and have it on the tongue, but will not live in harmony with it." 149)

Summary. *Christ warns against giving offense to children and to the lowly in His kingdom, illustrating His discourse with the parable of the lost sheep, teaches how to deal with an erring brother, and gives a lesson on forgiveness, illustrated with the parable of the unmerciful servant.*

149) Luther, 11, 1801.

CHAPTER 19.

On Marriage and Divorce. Matt. 19, 1—12.

The final departure from Galilee: V. 1. **And it came to pass that when Jesus had finished these sayings, He departed from Galilee, and came into the coasts of Judea, beyond Jordan;** v. 2. **and great multitudes followed Him, and He healed them there.** Galilee's day of grace was at its end. Jesus had fulfilled all things that He had intended for the people of the northern country. Even the last lesson, with its impressive sayings, had been given to the disciples only. The time of Christ's great Passion was near. He left Galilee to travel by easy stages into the country of Judea by way of Perea, along the eastern shore of the Jordan, opposite Samaria and Judea, including a large part of the former kingdom of the Edomites. He seems to have been in this country for some time, attending both to His teaching and healing ministry, Mark 10, 1. As in Galilee, so here many people were attracted by His fame; great crowds followed Him, and many, no doubt, received the seed of the Gospel truths into their hearts.

The question of the Pharisees: V. 3. **The Pharisees also came unto Him, tempting Him and saying unto Him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause?** Their persecution did not cease now that Jesus had deliberately turned His back to them and even left Galilee. They are in a class by themselves, distinct from the people that were following Jesus with no evil designs. With bitterness and hatred in their hearts they here again set a trap for the Lord by proposing an apparently innocent question. They wanted to know whether a man could divorce his wife "for every cause," for any cause whatsoever, that is, whether a man might put away his wife at all, Mark 10, 2. It was a catch question, either the positive or the negative answer intended to make enemies for Christ. "They purpose to catch Him. If He should answer: No, He would act contrary to Moses; but should He say: Yes, then He would tear marriage asunder, that people would reject each other and run apart, and the country be filled with adultery: they would therefore trip and catch Him. But He tears through all as a Master and Lord." 150) Or the connection may have been the following: "At this time there were two famous divinity and philosophical schools among the Jews, that of Shammai and that of Hillel. On the question of divorce the school of Shammai maintained that a man could not legally put away his wife, except for whoredom. The school of Hillel taught that a man might put away his wife for a multitude of other causes, and when she did not find grace in his sight, that is, when he saw any other woman that pleased him better." 151)

The answer of Jesus: V. 4. **And He answered and said unto them, Have ye not read that He which made them at the beginning made them male and female,**

150) Luther, 7, 966.
151) Clarke, *Commentary*, 5, 188.

v. 5. and said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and they twain shall be one flesh? V. 6. Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What, therefore, God hath joined together, let not man put asunder. The Pharisees, as usual, find the tables turned upon them. Christ is too firmly grounded in the truth of the Old Testament. They had been so sure that there was no way out of the dilemma, that Christ's answer, either way, would be sure to give offense. He appeals, with fine irony, to the knowledge of the books of Moses which they ought to have. He that made at the beginning, the Creator, at the time when Adam and Eve were the only representatives of the human race, made them two sexes, male and female. Their being brought together by God constituted the type of marriage in its fullest meaning, as an indissoluble union. At that time God Himself said, speaking through the mouth of Adam, Gen. 2, 24; cp. 1, 27, that for this reason, because marriage was so instituted and so intended by God, a man would sever the ties which formerly held him to his mother and father, in his relation of son in the family, and would be joined in union with his wife. The two that were formerly separate and distinct would, by following the instinct of sex, controlled by the ordinance of God, become united in the most intimate, in the strongest relation, that of physical, fleshly unity. Where marriage has been entered into in this manner, in obedience to God's natural and written laws, where there is unity of the two natures, of soul properly as well as body, of sympathy, interest, and purpose, there they can no more, nevermore, be two distinct, but they are and will remain, in the sight of God, *one* flesh. God has joined them together, yoked them together, as oxen before the plow, but not with a heavy, burdensome yoke, but with that of mutual affection, which will cause them cheerfully to share the inevitable difficulties of their joint estate, the man as shouldering the heaviest burdens, the wife as his faithful helpmate. Man shall not separate, is His plain statement, neither the persons that have thus been joined, thinking it a light matter to break the hallowed ties, nor any other person in the world, relatives, friends, the government. There is before God, strictly speaking, no such thing as granting a divorce. The Church or the government can merely state the fact, established by competent witnesses, that a marriage has been deliberately disrupted by one or both of the contracting parties, either by adultery or by malicious desertion; it cannot grant permission to break the marriage tie. Note: What the Lord here says represents the original, the primitive state of things with reference to marriage. He has never changed His ordinance. Only two persons, one man and one woman, shall be joined in holy wedlock; for if He had wished that the male dismiss one woman and marry another, He would have made more females at the beginning. Marriage is the natural, the logical relation for people to enter into at the proper time. The first two individuals of the male and female sex were not merely a man and a woman, but male and female, in the sense of being destined and intended exclusively for each other. Even now, in the normal human being, the presence of the sex instinct is the creation of God; for the two sexes are not created arbitrarily, or independently of, but for each other, suitable and adapted for each other, and should fulfil their destiny in accordance with God's ordinance, in holy wedlock, the indissoluble union. "As though He would say: Thou, man, shalt not permit thyself to be separated from thy wife, for He that created thee man brought thee to the woman; and He that made thee woman gave thee to the man as helpmate, and wants no divorce. Since this is so that what God has joined together no man shall part asunder, that He brings man and wife together, that He makes thee to be a man and thee to be a woman, and by His order man and woman become one body: therefore no man shall break this ordinance of God, whether his name be Moses or anything else; but here it says: Hast thou taken me, then thou must be separated from me only by death. If you are angry with each other and disagree, then be reconciled again, as also St. Paul commands, but divorce shall not be among you." 152)

An objection and its answer: **V. 7. They say unto Him, Why did Moses, then, command to give a writing of divorcement, and to put her away? V. 8. He saith unto them, Moses, because of the hardness of your hearts, suffered you to put away your wives; but from the beginning it was not so. V. 9. And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery; and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery.** The Pharisees' reference is to Deut. 24, 1—4. But they understood neither the intention nor the words of Moses. The purpose of Moses had been to hinder the practise of wholesale and easy divorces, and to offer to the woman at least some show of justice, by subjecting the process of separation in vogue among the Jews to certain rules and restrictions, in order to place the relationship of holy wedlock on a higher plane. Another point: Moses did not command that divorces should be obtained. He only made proper provision to safeguard the woman in case the husband insisted upon a separation. "The Pharisees seem to have regarded Moses as a patron of the practise of putting away, rather than as one bent on mitigating its evil results." 153)

---

152) Luther, 7, 968.

153) *Expositor's Greek Testament*, 1, 246.

"That was the law of Moses concerning the letter of divorce, and the Jews made use of this law with a vengeance; took wives and chased them away, took others, and regarded the process of marrying and taking wives no differently than a horse-trade. If a man had taken a wife, and she did not please him, he rejected her; and when he had divorced the first wife, and the second one did not suit him (he was sorry on account of the change), he soon wanted another, or desired his first wife again; thus they multiplied divorces. There Moses had placed a bolt in the way, prohibited the remarrying of the first wife; intended to prevent easy divorces; and on account of this addition in the law many kept their first wives." 154)

Jesus very frankly states the reason why Moses, as the lawgiver for the theocracy of the Old Testament, had included this provision, by inspiration of God. The hardness of their hearts, that condition of heart and mind which refuses to submit to the restraint of purity and holiness, and which will probably seek to vent its spite in acts of cruelty against the wife, made such a rule advisable. And permission was only implied, not commanded. It is true, in general, that it is dangerous to permit the least evil, though prudence may seem to require it, because such permission may soon be construed as command. The Lord knew that this method of dealing with the question would prevent greater evils. "Thus, in civil government, in a city, it may often be necessary to wink at the evil doings of a scoundrel and not punish him, though, properly speaking, he should lose his head. But there may be good cause for it, lest, in punishing him, twenty innocent people would be drawn into it and would suffer damage. . . . Because ye are such bad and desperate scoundrels, and cannot keep what God has commanded; in order, then, that no offense happen, nor that ye slay your wives, nor remove them with poison; therefore Moses has, not commanded, but permitted you to do this. Moses, then, has not given you that law on account of your righteousness, honor, and piety, but has suffered it and winked at it on account of the hardness of your hearts. It was not commanded by him, but Moses thought: This people is a proud and evil people, it might commit one murder after another. If they refuse to keep God's command, let them be divorced, that murder and poison be omitted. Whoever will not keep his wife willingly, let him put her away, lest a worse offense follow." 155) But the argument from God's institution of holy wedlock and from the original state of holy matrimony are entirely against such a condition of affairs. So far as Jesus is concerned, He repeats the declaration made in the Sermon on the Mount, chapter 5, 31. 32. He that for any reason puts away, rejects, his wife, except that of marital unfaithfulness, in which case the marriage tie has already been torn asunder, is an adulterer before God; and, in the same way, he that marries a divorcee, one that has left her husband without Scriptural grounds, is guilty of adultery.

The dismay of the disciples: V. 10. **His disciples say unto Him, If the case of the man be so with his wife, it is not good to marry.** V. 11. **But He said unto them, All men cannot receive this saying, save they to whom it is given.** V. 12. **For there are some eunuchs which were so born from their mother's womb; and there are some eunuchs which were made eunuchs of men; and there be eunuchs which have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake. He that is able to receive it, let him receive it.** The Jews of Christ's time had a very low view of women, and therefore of marriage. And the disciples were not free from the national ideas and prejudices. They had never had the subject presented to them like this before. If such be the state of affairs so far as the relations between husband and wife are concerned, they say, if the husband must regard his wife so highly, and if both husband and wife must regard the marriage bond as indissoluble, if this recourse to quick and easy divorces is both against the original order of God's institution and against His revealed will, then it is poor policy to get married. But Christ corrects their poor understanding, and shows distinctly that the estate of marriage is the normal state for normal adults, only such individuals being ordinarily exempt from this rule whose physical and spiritual condition renders them unfit for the duties peculiar to the physical side of marriage. Some people are naturally, from their birth, incapable of contracting marriage. Others have been rendered impotent, sterile, through deliberate mutilation by others, as was done in the case of the Oriental eunuchs. Still others purposely force themselves to chastity, to a life outside of marriage, keeping the natural desires in subjection, in order to be able to devote their entire time and life to the service of the kingdom of God. But all three classes are abnormal, even the last, except in cases of religious persecution or for some other extraordinary reason, 1 Cor. 7, 26. Herewith Christ neither commands nor recommends celibacy, but sets these people, as a class, in a separate category, and warns that it takes a great deal of spiritual and moral capacity to grasp His saying. The claims of the kingdom of heaven are paramount, but Christ expects no one to feign an asceticism to which he is not fully equal, since that would be setting aside the law for the propagation of the human race by the order of marriage, which Christ has, throughout His declaration, very warmly

154) Luther, 7, 964.
155) Luther, 7, 969.

defended. Cp. 1 Cor. 9, 5. 6. The last state described by Christ may, under circumstances, be preferable to the married state, but it takes an exceptional spiritual enlightenment to grasp it.

Christ Blessing Little Children.

Matt. 19, 13—15.

V. 13. **Then were there brought unto Him little children that He should put His hands on them and pray; and the disciples rebuked them.** The ministry of Jesus was by no means limited to adults. He had only very recently used a little child to emphasize a very important truth in the kingdom of God, chapter 18, 1—14. And the child, on that occasion, had willingly submitted to His kind advances, Mark 9, 36. That He was a friend of the children appears also from chapter 21, 15. 16, where the little children sing His praises. In this case the mothers brought their little children to Him. Their request was suggested as much by their manner as by any words they may have spoken. They wanted Jesus to lay His hands upon them in token of kindly blessing. His prayer over them would be their fitting consecration to God. There is no question in the minds of the mothers as to the faith living in the hearts of the little ones, even as Christ had expressly stated that they could believe in Him, chapter 18, 3—6. All attempts to deny and disprove this must come to naught before the simplicity and directness of the statements. Reason must not rule Scriptures, but at all times, and in all matters, be directed by it.[156] The disciples had not taken the recent lesson to heart very seriously, or else they had managed to forget it very quickly, for they spoke to the mothers of the little ones in a very harsh way for disturbing their Master with trifles and for worrying Him, whose thoughts were engaged, as they supposed, with far too weighty matters to bear such an unwelcome interruption. A similar excuse is made by people for not presenting all their difficulties to the Lord in prayer.

Christ's rebuke: V. 14. **But Jesus said, Suffer little children, and forbid them not to come unto Me; for of such is the kingdom of heaven.** V. 15. **And He laid His hands on them, and departed thence.** Jesus was openly displeased by the interference of the disciples. Let them alone, He says, do not bother them. To interfere with a child's coming to Jesus is to put an obstruction in one's own path to salvation. And hinder them not in their coming to Me. Every encouragement should be given the children that they may learn to know and love their Savior. For the kingdom of heaven is made up of such as they. The children themselves, with their simple trust and faith in Jesus, and all such as they, all that have the same confiding trust and spirit of faith, they make up the membership of the kingdom of God, they truly belong to His Church. All the blessings of His kingdom are theirs, even long before, yea, just because they have not come to the full use of their reason. A baptized child has just as full and complete a claim upon heaven as the most advanced Christian. This Jesus further stresses by giving outward evidence of His feeling toward the little children. He laid His hands upon them in blessing. He publicly acknowledged them as His own.

The Dangers of Riches. Matt. 19, 16—26.

V. 16. **And, behold, one came and said unto Him, Good Master, what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?** V. 17. **And He said unto him, Why callest thou Me good? There is none good but one, that is, God; but if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments.** V. 18. **He saith unto Him, Which? Jesus said, Thou shalt do no murder, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness,** v. 19. **Honor thy father and thy mother, and, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.** The evangelist introduces the story in a lively manner: Lo! Christ was on His journey through Perea, and the experience which Matthew had recorded in the first verses of this chapter may have been repeated often. People were always coming with various matters which they wanted to bring to Christ's attention. In this case, one man came, a ruler, Luke 18, 18, probably a rich young ruler of some small synagog, as some versions imply. Here was a frank, sincere, open heart, weary of the endless disputings of the scribes and Pharisees, earnestly seeking the truth. He is even now more than half convinced that he will find it with Jesus. Good Teacher, he calls out, what good shall I do that I may have eternal life? In order to lead him to the knowledge of all truth, Jesus, first of all, takes up the question as he has put it. He wants to test him as to his understanding of his own request: Why callest thou *Me* good? He does not mean to decline the title as not being applicable to Him, but to God only, nor as a mere appellation of courtesy. The accent and position of the word "Me" rather implies: Do you know that in calling Me good, you are placing Me on a level with God Himself, and rightly so? Far, therefore, from rejecting the honor, Christ rather joyfully takes up the word and emphasizes its full import and significance. He now proceeds with the second test: So far as your wish to enter eternal life is concerned, you, as a ruler of a school, ought to have the information; the way you yourself have taught is that of the fulfilment of the Law. The young man was sincere enough, but he was suffering with the same amount of self-righteousness that every other person does by nature. In such cases it is necessary to refer to the Law of God and

156) Cp. Luther, 7, 982—987.

preach complete fulfilment of every commandment. If a person then has his eyes opened and freely acknowledges his insufficiency and sinfulness, then there is a chance for the knowledge of the Savior and for the faith in this Redeemer which alone brings to heaven. Two significant facts: If it were not for man's natural depravity and his blindness in spiritual things, he could, indeed, get to heaven by fulfilling the commandments. A complete keeping of the Law earns life everlasting, Luke 10, 28. Keeping the commandments is also enjoined upon the Christians as an exercise in sanctification. "The commandments must be kept, or there is no life, but only death. For even faith is nothing, where love, that is, the fulfilment of the commandments, does not follow, 1 Cor. 13, 2. For Christ, God's Son, has not come, nor did He die for that reason that we should freely be disobedient to the commandments, but that we might fulfil the commandments through His help and assistance. Therefore as it is said: Works without faith are nothing, so it is also true: Faith without fruit is also vain. For work without faith is idolatry. Faith without work is a lie, and no faith." 157)

In order to open the eyes of the young man, who again frankly asks, What kind? Which do you mean? Those of Moses or those of the elders? Jesus slowly recites the chief commandments of the second table of the Decalog, placing the summary of the entire table in the last place. He hoped that the mere hearing of the list from the lips of another might cause the man to think, to reflect, to apply the words to himself, to examine his heart properly. But even the last commandment did not so much as stir his conscience.

The test: V. 20. **The young man saith unto Him, All these things have I kept from my youth up; what lack I yet?** V. 21. **Jesus said unto him, If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell all that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven; and come and follow Me.** V. 22. **But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful; for he had great possessions.** Christ's recital of the second table had not so much as stirred a ripple in the self-righteous equanimity of the young man. He was so steeped in his good opinion of himself that it would take a strong wrench to wake him up out of his selfishness. So far as he was concerned, he felt satisfied that he had kept all the commandments from his youth, according to the Pharisaic standard of keeping the letter, but not the spirit. So Christ takes him at his word. If he is really anxious to be perfect before the Law of God, above all, if he wants to present concrete evidence of his fulfilment of the summary of the second table, let him give the proceeds of the sale of all his goods to the poor, thus showing that he loved them as himself. This was Christ's test of the young man. He knew his heart and realized that his chief fault was his love of his goods and his unwillingness to make sacrifices. For it is true at all times: our love of God must go above all things. If it should therefore be necessary, for the sake of the kingdom of God, to sacrifice all earthly possessions and life itself for His sake in order to make our discipleship perfect, there can be but one answer, if we are sincere in our profession of Christianity: unconditional assent. In this case, the young man, like so many thousands since his time, "went away sorrowful," deeply saddened and grieved, Mark 10, 22. That one cross, which would not even have included personal affliction, physical suffering, was too much for him. He proved himself unfit to be a follower of Jesus. He loved his goods more than his Lord. The thorns of the love of money infested the rich soil of his heart and stifled the seed of the Word which had gotten a hopeful start; a lovable, otherwise noble nature lost for the sake of a few paltry dollars.

The lesson: V. 23. **Then said Jesus unto His disciples, Verily I say unto you, That a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven.** V. 24. **And again I say unto you, It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.** V. 25. **When His disciples heard it, they were exceedingly amazed, saying, Who then can be saved?** V. 26. **But Jesus beheld them, and said unto them, With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.** The incident of the rich young man had made a deep impression also upon Jesus. As usual, He makes application of the lesson which He drew from the happening for His disciples. Solemnly He declares a profound, severe truth. So far as a rich man is concerned, with difficulty shall he enter into the kingdom of heaven. Wealth in itself is not a hindrance in the divine life, but its possession is attended with the greatest danger on account of the temptation of placing one's trust in corruptible goods, Mark 10, 24; 1 Tim. 6, 9. Christ uses an Oriental figure to bring out strongly the truth which He wishes to impress upon His disciples. The picture of a camel passing through a needle's eye was an Oriental proverb illustrating an extremely difficult feat. So is the case of those that place their trust in riches. To enter into the kingdom, it is necessary that a person renounce this world entirely.

The disciples had listened to the remarks of their Master with increasing consternation. This saying was a positive shock to them. Under such conditions the chance for salvation is slim indeed, since there is the love of something in this world in every man's heart. But Jesus gave them a long look of kindly sympathy, of careful observation. His concluding

157) Luther, 9, 1806.

words should sink deeply into their hearts. With men, with mere human beings, this is impossible; they cannot, by their reason and strength, tear their hearts away from the things of this world. But with God all things are possible, though they seem never so impossible to men. All things that are impossible according to the judgment of men, all things that are impossible according to the power of men: the working of salvation, the gaining of redemption, the obtaining of the glories of heaven, all these things have been made possible by God in and through Jesus Christ. And God has the power to convert and renew sinful men, to tear their hearts away from all earthly things and let them be wholly given to Him.

The Reward of the Apostles.

Matt. 19, 27—30.

Peter's question: V. 27. **Then answered Peter and said unto Him, Behold, we have forsaken all and followed Thee; what shall we have therefore?** There may have been a trace of arrogance and self-satisfaction in Peter's tone as he addressed this question to Jesus. He had heard the demand which Jesus addressed to the young man, also the promise of a treasure in heaven, if he would comply with the request to sell all his goods. Peter's conclusion therefore is justified: We have done that, we have left behind all things, everything in the line of goods and wealth that we possessed; does the sequel apply to us? The presumption lies in the question: What then will our reward be? Surely we are entitled to a treasure in heaven, if that is all that Thou demandest.

The answer: V. 28. **And Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed Me, in the regeneration when the Son of Man shall sit in the throne of His glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.** Jesus does not take occasion here to explain once more what discipleship comprises; He merely makes a statement, a prophecy as to the future. In the regeneration, in the new birth of the world on Judgment Day, when the kingdom of heaven will be finally completed, when the kingdom of glory shall begin, when the Son of Man will Himself sit on His throne to judge the world in righteousness, then the apostles shall sit upon twelve thrones and take part in the administration of Christ's justice and power upon all believers in Christ, who are the twelve tribes in fact, the true children of Abraham.

The application to all Christians: V. 29. **And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands for My name's sake shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life.** V. 30. **But many that are first shall be last, and the last shall be first.** Most impressively Jesus details the persons and goods which usually claim the affection of people in this world. The recital serves to bring out all the more emphatically the denial of self, which is a demand of Christ. For the sake of Christ and in the confession of His name everything else must cheerfully be given up and sacrificed without a single regret, even if it means the breaking of all earthly ties. All the greater will be His reward of mercy. Manifoldly, in great fulness, shall they receive from Him in return. Not only shall the value of all be restored in richest abundance, but as the climax of all the reward of mercy will include eternal life. All this for those that suffered and denied for the sake of Christ, to bear His shame and to further His kingdom. But the Lord adds a warning for the sake of such as are inclined to be self-satisfied and proud of their own works. The earlier or later calling has no influence upon a person's standing in the Judgment. But he that wants to depend upon his works and intends to urge those on the last day as meriting the bliss of heaven, he has denied the grace and atoning work of His Savior and will find no place in the kingdom of heaven. All poor sinners, however, that want to be saved by grace only, will find their place prepared in the heavenly mansions.

Summary. *Christ gives a lesson on marriage and divorce, blesses little children, shows the danger of placing trust in riches, and assures the apostles and all Christians of their reward of grace in heaven.*

CHAPTER 20.

Parable of the Laborers in the Vineyard.

Matt. 20, 1—16.

V. 1. **For the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is an householder which went out early in the morning to hire laborers into his vineyard.** This parable is often called the parable of the hours, since the length of the working-day is an important item in the lesson of the story as told by Jesus. He had been discussing the reward of mercy which was to be given to those that would be firm in the confession of His name, but had added the warning against a foolish depending upon personal merits before God, since this involved the danger of losing the reward. His Church as it appears before men, as its work is being carried out before them and for their salvation, is like unto the ruler of a house, either the housefather or the manager of an

estate. Such a one might be found almost any morning, in the very earliest hours, as he was obliged to go out and hire laborers, in order that the ripe fruit might not spoil for want of grape-pickers. Similar cases can be found in great number just before the harvest season in any country.

The hiring: V. 2. **And when he had agreed with the laborers for a penny a day, he sent them into his vineyard.** V. 3. **And he went out about the third hour, and saw others standing idle in the market-place,** v. 4. **and said unto them, Go ye also into the vineyard, and whatsoever is right I will give you. And they went their way.** V. 5. **Again he went out about the sixth and ninth hour and did likewise.** V. 6. **And about the eleventh hour he went out, and found others standing idle, and saith unto them, Why stand ye here all the day idle?** V. 7. **They say unto him, Because no man hath hired us. He saith unto them, Go ye also into the vineyard; and whatsoever is right, that shall ye receive.** Some laborers he managed to find at early dawn, and he could hire them so that they were able to go to work at once, the Jewish working-day lasting from six in the morning to six in the evening. Mark well: The word "hire" is emphasized in the parable, since its point is also to bring out the necessity of being actively engaged in labor in the kingdom of God. For a *denarius* a day the householder hired the workmen; that was the usual day's wage, about fifteen cents in American money, apparently small, until one considers that the value of money was much greater in those days than at the present time. The Roman soldiers received even less. The householder and the laborers agreed on the basis of a penny, or *denarius;* he offered the sum, and they agreed, the contract thus becoming binding upon both parties. Since they were now in his employ, he sent them out to his vineyard. Three hours later the householder fared forth again, at nine o'clock. At the market-place, the public square in the center of the town, where the unemployed workmen gathered and waited for some master to hire them, he found others standing without employment. In hiring these men, a definite coin or sum was not stipulated, his promise being merely that he would do the right and just thing by them; he would give them what he considered fair wages. Also you, he says; a fair number he had secured at the beginning of the day, but he could use more to advantage. These men agreed to the conditions and went out to work in the vineyard. At high noon and at three o'clock in the afternoon the same process was repeated, with the same contract agreed to in the same way. But the last hiring-trip of the day was especially noteworthy. It was five in the afternoon when it became evident that the work on hand ought to be finished that very evening and that a sufficient number of willing hands might be able to accomplish the task. So once more the master hied himself to the market-place. There he found still others patiently standing. They were without employment, they had wanted work and had not been able to get it. With all possible haste he sends them into his vineyard: You go too, though it be so late. He specifies no reward, no wages. Willingness and speed were essential.

The settlement at evening: V. 8. **So when even was come, the lord of the vineyard saith unto his steward, Call the laborers, and give them their hire, beginning from the last unto the first.** V. 9. **And when they came that were hired about the eleventh hour, they received every man a penny.** V. 10. **But when the first came, they supposed that they should have received more; and they likewise received every man a penny.** V. 11. **And when they had received it, they murmured against the goodman of the house,** v. 12. **saying, These last have wrought but one hour, and thou hast made them equal unto us, which have borne the burden and heat of the day.** Six o'clock came, and the master gave the foreman, or steward, one of whose duties was the paying of the laborers, the command to call the workmen and pay them their wages. The order of payment is significant: He should begin with those that came and worked but one hour; commencing with the last one he should continue down the line to the first ones. Each one should receive the full amount of his hire, the amount which the householder had indicated to the steward. A very important point: According to common usage, the length of the employment decided the amount of the wages; the day-laborer that worked only a few hours received less than he that worked all day. But when those of about the eleventh hour came, they received each one his *denarius*, just as though he had worked a full day. Evidently there was here a case of a free gift or present, whether the other workmen wanted to consider the master as extravagant and foolish or not. But they, seeing this liberality, drew a wrong conclusion. When the first ones came, they that had been hired by regular contract in the morning, they eagerly expected a greater amount than the others had gotten. To their great chagrin, only the money named in the contract of the morning was forthcoming: Also they received each one his *denarius*. Now they accepted the money, but they immediately began and continued to voice their dissatisfaction. They murmured against the manager or ruler of the estate. Their complaint is excellently put, they express their contempt for the laborers of the eleventh hour. These last, they say, put in only one hour, they have spent that much time without really accomplishing anything worth speaking of, and equal thou hast

made them to us, to us that have been obliged to bear the burden of the day's work, and the scorching heat of noonday into the bargain. What was one hour of late afternoon in comparison with that? And yet their pay is the same?

The application of this part of the parable to the work of the kingdom of Christ is not difficult. It teaches us both to avoid envy and to yield honors to those whom the Lord honors. "Whosoever has the gifts of Jesus and knows that we are all equal in Christ, he tends to his work gladly, though he here on earth, for this short time, be in a humbler position and station than some other one. For there it shall be arranged so that in the external life there is a dissimilarity, that one has much, the other little; that one is master, the other servant. That does not bother a Christian, but he says: In God's name, here on earth it shall not be otherwise; though I have a more difficult station than the master or the mistress of the house; though I be not so powerful as a prince, king, or emperor: yet will I not murmur about it, but gladly and willingly remain in my station, until God deals differently with me and also makes me a master or mistress. In the mean time, I comfort myself with this fact that I know neither emperor nor king has another Christ nor more of Christ than I." 158) And so far as the giving of equal rewards of grace to all believers, to all members of the kingdom, is concerned, there shall be no pointing to a greater amount of good works before God, as though they were able to merit anything in His sight. "All work-saints must necessarily have such pride that know nothing of the grace of God and believe to be their own what they are able to do and what they perform, and that the Lord shall not judge according to His goodness, but according to the weight and ponderousness of their works. But whosoever has realized what grace means, he is not surprised, if God gives the same reward for the small and for the great works." 159)

The master's answer: V. 13. **But he answered one of them and said, Friend, I do thee no wrong; didst not thou agree with me for a penny?** V. 14. **Take that thine is, and go thy way; I will give unto this last even as unto thee.** V. 15. **Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own? Is thine eye evil because I am good?** V. 16. **So the last shall be first, and the first last; for many be called, but few chosen.** In choosing one man out of the whole company of murmurers, the master gave all the greater force to his application. Friend, or companion, comrade, fellow, he calls him, my good fellow, my dear neighbor, combining respect with reproof. There could be no accusation of wrong against the householder. The man had received the wages fixed by express contract, to which he had agreed of his own free will. His work was at an end, his payment he had received. The proper thing for him to do was to take up his money and go, not make a disagreeable scene. And the master also answers the objection that had been voiced. It is his pleasure, his distinct will, to give to the last of the workmen, him that came in latest of all, as much money as a free present as he gave to the first one by actual contract. He challenges the right of any one to interfere with his way of spending his money. And just because he gave presents to the one set of workmen, it does not follow that he is obliged to do the same thing in the case of others. Where gifts, presents, and benefits are concerned, there can be no question as to merit and reward. A foolish, unauthorized demand renders unworthy of all consideration. It can be due only to malice, jealousy, and envy, which shows itself in the darkened, unfriendly eye, that one is dissatisfied with the goodness of the master, with the generousness which does more than the situation demands. And so Jesus repeats the lesson of the story, chapter 19, 30: "The last shall be first, and the first last." He that insists upon the recognition of his works and merit before the judgment of the Ruler, will find them woefully inadequate for the capturing of first place. Rather will this demand result in a person's being made the least and the last in the kingdom of God, with the danger of being lost forever.

Christ here shows the peculiar, the singular justice that obtains in the kingdom of God. In temporal affairs, whatever a person accomplishes and merits will be credited to him as a matter of just reward. But the custom of the kingdom of God is different. Whenever the question is broached as to how a person may be justified before God and saved, the grace of God alone decides. He distributes the gifts of His kingdom according to His gracious will, and not according to natural worthiness or unworthiness. True it is that there is a difference between those that are called into the kingdom. Some have borne the heat and burden of the day, have labored most diligently all their lives, have been diligent in all good works, have left and denied many things for the sake of Christ's name. Others have been converted late in life, they have spent a large part of their life in following the vain dreams of the world. In the very evening of their life they have heard and heeded the call of Jesus and have but little time left to show their faith in good works. But so far as their relation to God is concerned, they are on the same level with the first. The one group, as the other, is saved by faith alone. And should there be such people among the first as are proud of themselves, as point with conceit to their good works, to the fact that they have labored successfully in the external kingdom of Christ, as

158) Luther, 13, 195. 196.
159) Luther, 12, 1821.

are offended at the goodness and mercy of God toward the lowly, they cannot maintain their position in the Church of mercy. Not being willing to be saved like the publicans and sinners, like the thief on the cross, they lose their salvation altogether; they bring upon themselves condemnation.160)

This parable of the laborers in the vineyard and the call of the Lord into His kingdom has always been considered a serious and searching lesson, and rightly so. But there is as much loving comfort as serious warning in the story. "This Gospel concerns those that are of the opinion that they are before God the first or the last; therefore it strikes mighty fine people, yea, it terrifies the greatest saints. For this reason Christ also holds it even before the apostles. For here it happens that some person may, in the sight of the world, be poor, weak, despised, yea, for the sake of God suffers, that there is no evidence that he is something, and still in his heart he is secretly full of self-conceit, and believes himself to be the first before God, and for that very reason is the last. On the other hand, if one is so faint-hearted and shy that he believes himself to be the last before God, though before the world he has money, honor, and possessions, and is the first for his very meekness." 161)

Christ Again Foretells His Passion.

Matt. 20, 17—19.

V. 17. **And Jesus, going up to Jerusalem, took the twelve disciples apart in the way and said unto them,** v. 18. **Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man shall be betrayed unto the chief priests and unto the scribes; and they shall condemn Him to death,** v. 19. **and shall deliver Him to the Gentiles to mock, and to scourge, and to crucify Him; and the third day He shall rise again.** This is Christ's third prediction concerning His Passion. The first time He had stated only in a general way that He would suffer many things, chapter 16, 21. In the second prophecy His betrayal and delivery into the hands of men had been spoken of chapter 17, 22. Here the sufferings are enumerated in detail; here the men that would be guilty of the atrocious behavior against Him are named. Jesus had set His face steadfastly to journey to Jerusalem. The journey occupied some time, but never once did He falter. He had been in Bethany with His friends Mary, Martha, and Lazarus, John 11, 38—44. He had then retired for a time to Ephraim, near Bethel, John 11, 54. He now made ready to go to Jerusalem, to the Passover festival, with His disciples, who were amazed and afraid, Mark 10, 32. For this reason, Jesus made an effort to make them see the necessity of His coming Passion, according to the words of the prophets. He took the Twelve alone, by themselves, in order to be altogether undisturbed, and then He made this third announcement. They were going up to Jerusalem, the holy city of the Jews, not only because it was situated on a hill, high above the surrounding country, but also because, in the eyes of the Israelites, it was the most elevated, the most sublime city in the world. He names the men that would carry out the damnable design, the chief priests and the scribes. He states in what way it will be done: He will be sentenced to death. But the sentence of death will not be carried out by the murderers, since Gentile people, Gentile soldiers, would deride and scourge and crucify Him. In spite of all this, however, He would finally triumph, He would rise again on the third day. He is the omniscient Son of God, true God Himself, who is willingly going forward into suffering and death. This fact gave to His work of redemption its great value.

The Requests of the Sons of Zebedee.

Matt. 20, 20—28.

V. 20. **Then came to Him the mother of Zebedee's children with her sons, worshiping Him, and desiring a certain thing of Him.** V. 21. **And He said unto her, What wilt thou? She saith unto Him, Grant that these my two sons may sit, the one on Thy right hand, and the other on the left, in Thy kingdom.** The two sons of Zebedee, James and John, were among the first disciples of Jesus, Matt. 4, 21. 22. In the early days of their discipleship they were not characterized by the same patience and kindness that was the most prominent attribute of John in later years. They were both impulsive in speech and rash in action, Mark 3, 17. Their mother's name was Maria Salome, a sister of Mary, the mother of Jesus, John 19, 25; Luke 8, 2. 3; 23, 55. She belonged to that small band of woman disciples that had ministered to the Lord. She probably had heard the promise that Jesus had made to the Twelve, chapter 19, 28, and had drawn the conclusion that the cousinship of her sons, and the fact that they had been singled out by the Lord for special attentions, warranted her bold request. And her sons, as yet hardly conscious of the meaning of true discipleship, eagerly took up the idea, seconding their mother's plea. She was very importunate about her request; she knelt down at Jesus' feet and begged earnestly, womanlike seeking fulfilment of her wish before stating it. Being asked by Jesus what her desire was, she stated that she wished her sons to occupy the highest places of honor in the Messianic kingdom, for thus the seats on the right hand and on the left hand of the rulers were regarded. As Luther says: "The flesh ever seeks to be glorified before it is crucified; exalted before it is abased."

The answer of Jesus: V. 22. **But Jesus an-**

160) Stoeckhardt, *Biblische Geschichte des Neuen Testaments*, 220. 221.

161) Luther, 11, 513.

swered and said, Ye know not what ye ask. Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with? They say unto Him, We are able. V. 23. **And He saith unto them, Ye shall drink indeed of My cup, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with; but to sit on My right hand and on My left is not Mine to give, but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared of My Father.** Incidents of this nature must have tried the patience of Jesus very sorely, but in His gentleness He tried to correct their carnal idea of the Messianic kingdom by pointing out what the honor which they sought involved. Turning to the sons, He frankly tells them that their conception of the future kingdom of Christ is altogether wrong, that their petition plainly shows their utter ignorance of the spiritual character of the Kingdom. Besides, there was a large measure of arrogant selfishness in their ignoring the probable claims of the other disciples. He tries to open their eyes to their foolishness by asking whether they believe themselves able to share in the fate which would come upon Him according to God's plan of redemption, whether they can drink the bitter cup of suffering, wrath, and damnation which He must drain, Matt. 26, 39. 42, whether they can bear to be submerged in that baptism of blood which would fall to His lot in His last great Passion. Instead of considering this prospect very carefully, they give Him their decided answer at once, declaring their ability thus to share in His Passion. Strange blindness! They knew not what they were taking upon themselves. Slowly, sorrowfully, and impressively Jesus lifts the veil of the future and predicts for them suffering after His own manner. "The great question connected with the sufferings of the Cross was not one of human heroism, or of the capability of endurance, but of inward, divine, and holy preparation. As yet the two disciples were incapable of making this distinction. Hence the Lord declined their sharing His sufferings in the former sense; while at the same time He pointed forward to the period when they should have part in them, in the higher and only true sense. The reply of Christ must therefore be regarded in the light of a correction implying an admission of their calling to suffer with Him; the fact of their being at present unable, in the spiritual sense, to share in His sufferings, being graciously presented in the form of an affirmation that the time for this should arrive." 162) As for the granting of their petition, however, He could give them no satisfaction, could not grant their request. That was not a matter to be decided at this time, in an almost offhand way, but comes under the provision of the Father. His answer does not imply that the Father possessed an authority which He, the Son, did not share. He merely wishes to impress upon them that He will not abuse His power like an earthly ruler in giving posts of honor and authority according to arbitrariness and pleasure, but that the Father has from eternity prepared for them, whom by grace He has chosen unto salvation, a part of the future glory and dominion of His Son. This is true of all disciples. It is necessary that they first suffer with Christ; that is the way to glory. But they can never earn the glory of heaven by the sufferings of this present time. That is God's free gift in Christ Jesus to them that are His.

A lesson in humility: V. 24. **And when the ten heard it, they were moved with indignation against the two brethren.** V. 25. **But Jesus called them unto Him and said, Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them.** V. 26. **But it shall not be so among you; but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister;** v. 27. **and whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant:** v. 28. **even as the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many.** The disciples were still very human. Since their hearts, therefore, were filled with the same ambitions, with the same jealousy, as those of the two sons of Zebedee, they became violently excited and agitated against James and John. These men had almost succeeded in getting what every one of them was secretly desiring. Jesus was obliged to calm the excited minds. The relation of governors and governed, of rulers and servants in the Church of Christ and among His disciples is entirely different from that of any secular government. The reigning heads of the people in general are accustomed to lord it over their subjects, and the great ones of the world play the tyrant over those in their power. The rule in the kingdom of Jesus is just the reverse, it is not so among the disciples of Jesus. He speaks of the condition of things as it should exist, as we should expect to find it among Christians. Greatness by service is the only measure of greatness that Christ recognizes. If one has the ambition to be great before Christ in the midst of his brethren, his life's aim shall be to be the servant of the others; if he would be reckoned as being first, let him become, literally, and in the best sense of the word, a slave to others. Unselfish ministry, ungrudging service is the mark of true greatness before Christ. Striving for honor and glory before men in no way agrees with the spirit which He displayed throughout His life. For He Himself, equipped with power over all creation, by virtue of His divinity, having the authority to demand service from all man, did not make use of this power, but

162) Schaff, *Commentary, Matthew*, 364.

spent His life in serving. His entire life was a ministry in the interest of all men, culminating in the great sacrifice which is at the same time most mysterious and most glorious: He gave His life as a ransom for many. The whole world was sold into the power of Satan, death, and hell, and there was no salvation on earth. All men were doomed to be chained with the fetters of this slavery to all eternity. But Christ came and gave His own life in their stead, thus ransoming and redeeming all men from the power of the enemies. In view of such a sacrifice, it surely must be out of the question for any follower of Christ to do anything but strive after that same humility, that same spirit of unselfish service. And the pastors, the ministers of Jesus and His Church in a special sense, will gladly follow the example of their great Head. "My office therefore and that of every preacher and pastor does not consist in lording it, but herein, that I serve you all, that ye learn to know God, that ye are baptized, that ye have the true Word of God, and that ye finally may be saved, and do not venture to assume the worldly government, which princes and lords, mayors and judges, shall appoint and take care of. My office is only a service which I should give to every one free and for nothing, seeking neither money nor goods, neither honor nor anything else. . . . But, indeed, if I do that, then ye are afterwards obliged to do this, that ye support me. For since I should preach and serve you therewith, I cannot in the mean time provide my own food; therefore ye are under obligation to support me, and that entirely for nothing, for whosoever serves the altar, says St. Paul, shall live off the altar." 163)

Healing of Two Blind Men.

Matt. 20, 29—34.

The cry: V. 29. **And as they departed from Jericho, a great multitude followed Him.** V. 30. **And, behold, two blind men sitting by the wayside, when they heard that Jesus passed by, cried out, saying, Have mercy on us, O Lord, Thou Son of David.** V. 31. **And the multitude rebuked them, because they should hold their peace; but they cried the more, saying, Have mercy on us, O Lord, Thou Son of David.** Jesus did not go to Jerusalem by the direct route, but by way of Jericho, thus gaining opportunity for further works of saving grace and for this double miracle. For Matthew here combines the recital of two healings in one brief account. Jesus undoubtedly entered and left the city by the same gate, that toward the east. When He entered, there was a blind man sitting near the gate, Luke 18, 35—43. And the miracle performed in this case became known during the stay of Jesus and so encouraged blind Bartimaeus, Mark 10, 46—52, that he pleaded for sight in the same words which had proved so potent in the case of his fellow-sufferer. Attracted by the conversion of Zacchaeus and by the teaching of Jesus in the city, a great multitude followed after Him. And in either case, the tumult and the shouting of the passing crowd informed the blind beggar of the passing of the Lord. Their plea is that of the right, of the saving knowledge of the Savior. They recognized and confessed Him as the Son of David, as the promised Messiah, who, in His mercy, could cure them. Mercy only they pleaded for, they felt their unworthiness because of their sin, they realized the necessity of pleading for mercy in the presence of Him who was so infinitely above them. After the manner usually followed in such cases, many of the crowd harshly bade them keep their peace, helpless cripples being regarded as a nuisance and treated accordingly, with heartless severity. But they redoubled their energy in sending forth their cry for mercy and help.

The healing: V. 32. **And Jesus stood still, and called them, and said, What will ye that I shall do unto you?** V. 33. **They say unto Him, Lord, that our eyes may be opened.** V. 34. **So Jesus had compassion on them, and touched their eyes; and immediately their eyes received sight, and they followed Him.** The fact that Jesus took an interest in the blind men at once changed the attitude of the multitude, and many now offered assistance. The cry of faith touched the Lord's heart, their confession of His divine power in answer to His question, their earnest prayer for the opening of their eyes, moved Him with deep compassion. He touched their eyes, and at His miraculous touch their sight was at once restored. Jesus of Nazareth, who by His suffering and death has saved the souls of all men from eternal perdition, has deep compassion also upon the physical troubles and sicknesses of them that believe in Him.

Summary. *Christ teaches the meaning of the reward of grace by the parable of the hours, foretells His Passion in greater detail, gives His disciples a lesson in true humility, and heals two blind men.*

163) Luther, 7, 1040. 1041.

THE CALL OF THE GOSPEL.

"From the verse: Many are called, but few are chosen, many meddlesome heads draw various thoughts that are neither fitting nor divine, following this line of thought: He whom God has chosen will be saved without means; and again, he whom He has not chosen may do whatever he will, be as pious and believing as he will, still it is ordained unto him that he must fall and cannot be saved; therefore I shall let it go as it will. If I should be saved, it will be without my interference; if not, all that I do and attempt is futile. What manner

of untoward, secure people grow out of such impious thoughts every one can figure out for himself. Now, on the day of the Magi [Epiphany], when we spoke of the verse of the Prophet Micah, it was sufficiently shown that such thoughts are to be shunned as the devil himself, and a different form to study and think about God's will be chosen; that is, we should not bother God in His glory and in His election (*Versehung*), for there He is incomprehensible. And it is impossible that a person should not be offended by such thoughts, and either fall into despair, or else become absolutely godless and bold.

"But whosoever wants to know God and His will correctly, should go the right way, by which he will not be offended, but improved. The right way is Christ the Lord, when He says: 'No man cometh unto the Father but by Me.' Whoever, then, wants to know the Father correctly and come to Him, let him come to Christ first, and learn to know Him, namely, thus: Christ is the Son of God and almighty, eternal God. But what does the Son of God do? He becomes man for our sake, He becomes subject to the Law, in order to redeem us from the Law, He permits Himself to be crucified and dies on the cross, in order to pay for our sins; and He arises from the dead, in order to make, by His resurrection, an entrance into eternal life, and bring help against eternal death; and He sits at the right hand of God, in order to be advocate for us and to give us the Holy Ghost, by whom we may be ruled and led and kept against every temptation and suggestion of the devil. That means to know Christ rightly. When, then, this knowledge is good and firm in the heart, then begin and ascend into heaven and figure it out thus: Since the Son of God has done this for the sake of men, what follows with regard to the heart of God in its attitude toward us men, since His Son does this out of the Father's will and command? Surely thy own reason must force thee to say: Since God has given His only-begotten Son for our sake, and for our sake has not spared Him, He surely can have no evil designs toward us. It is not His will that we should be lost, since He seeks and uses the supreme means to help us to life. In this way we may come to God in the right manner, as Christ Himself preaches, John 3, 16: 'God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.' Just hold these thoughts against the others that grow out of the other opinion, and ye will find that the other thoughts are those of the unpleasant devil, by which a man must become offended, and either despair or become bold and godless, since he can expect nothing good from God.

"Some draw other thoughts for themselves, and explain the words thus: Many are called, that is, God offers His grace to many; but few are chosen, that is, He imparts this grace to few, for only a few are saved. That is altogether a wicked understanding, for how can it be possible, if a person thinks and believes thus of God, that he will not become God's enemy, since the absence of His will is the cause that we are not all saved? But just hold this opinion against the other which is found where people learn to know Christ the Lord first, and it will be found that such are all devilish blasphemies. Therefore there is an entirely different meaning in this verse: Many are called, etc. For the preaching of the Gospel is general and public for all that want to hear and accept it; and for that reason God has the Gospel preached so generally and publicly that every one should hear, believe, and accept it, and thus be saved. But how do things go? As it follows in the Gospel: Few are chosen, that is, few assume such an attitude toward the Gospel that God is favorably inclined toward them. For some hear it and pay no attention; others hear it and do not cling firmly to it, also do not want to make sacrifices or suffer for it; some hear it, but prefer money and goods and worldly lust. But that is not pleasing to God, and He does not want such people. That is what Christ calls 'not being chosen,' that is, not to behave so that God can be well pleased with them. But those are chosen people and well-pleasing to God that hear the Gospel diligently, believe in Christ, manifest their faith in good works, and suffer on that account what they must suffer.

"This understanding is the right understanding that can offend no one, but improves the people that they think: Well and good, since I should be well-pleasing to God and chosen of Him, it will not be the proper thing for me to live with a bad conscience, to sin against God's commandment, and not hinder sin; but I must go to the preaching of the Word, pray God for His Holy Ghost, not permit the Word to leave the heart, defend myself against the devil and his suggestions, and pray for protection, patience, and assistance; then the result is splendid Christians. On the other hand, those that believe God to grudge salvation to some people, either become desperate or secure and godless, live like the beasts and think: It is all ordained whether I shall become saved or not; why should I hurt myself? No, not thus; thou hast the command, thou shalt hear the Word of God and believe in Christ that He is thy Savior and has paid for thy sins. Remember this command, to follow it. If thou find thyself without faith, or weak, pray God for His Holy Ghost and do not doubt Christ is thy Savior, and thou shalt be saved through Him if thou believe on Him, that is, if thou take comfort in Him. May our dear Lord Jesus Christ grant this to us all! Amen." 164)

164) Luther, 13, 199—203.

CHAPTER 21.

Christ's Entry into Jerusalem.

Matt. 21, 1—11.

V. 1. **And when they drew nigh unto Jerusalem, and were come to Bethphage, unto the Mount of Olives, then sent Jesus two disciples,** v. 2. **saying unto them, Go into the village over against you, and straightway ye shall find an ass tied, and a colt with her; loose them, and bring them unto Me.** V. 3. **And if any man say aught unto you, ye shall say, The Lord hath need of them; and straightway he will send them.** After the miracle at Jericho, Jesus had come directly to Bethany, a small town on the eastern side of the Mount of Olives. Here He had been a few weeks before, when He had raised His friend Lazarus from the dead, thereby greatly intensifying the hatred of the Pharisees and high priests, John 11, 53. On this occasion the Lord reached Bethany on a Sabbath and spent the day in the house of Simon the Leper. At the supper made for Him there, Mary had anointed Him for His burying, John 12, 7. The next morning Jesus continued His journey. But the report of His coming had reached Jerusalem, and many of the festival pilgrims left the city to meet Him, singing the joyful hymn of festive occasions: "Hosanna! Blessed is the King of Israel that cometh in the name of the Lord!" John 12, 12. 13. With the vanguard of this multitude Jesus came to Bethphage, the "house of figs," a small village on the southeastern slope of the Mount of Olives, almost adjoining Bethany, on the main road to Jerusalem. At the entrance to this small town Jesus halted for a time, in order to send two of His disciples as a delegation. He gives them explicit directions: In this very place lying just before them they would at once, without difficulty, find a she-ass tied, having her foal with her; without asking leave, loose and bring, as though they were the owners. And should the owners or any other person remonstrate as to their right in taking the animals away, the mere word: The Lord hath need of them, He has a reason for wanting them, would serve as a pass-word, bringing about immediate obedience and glad yielding on the part of the owner. Three significant points: The Lord knew that the animals were at the designated place, and He again took an opportunity to convince His disciples that nothing was hidden from Him. His word has almighty power and authority. As the minute occurrences of the future are open before Him, so He, Lord to whom all things belong, can influence the heart of the owner even at a distance to yield to His wishes. The two disciples were absolutely in the dark as to the object of their mission, John 12, 16, and undoubtedly went with great reluctance to carry out His command, which might have brought them into unpleasant difficulties, but they go at His word, since they knew from experience that He would remove all dangers. Thus the disciples of Christ of all times may trust implicitly in the Word of their omniscient, omnipotent Lord, knowing that even in dark ways His authority will uphold them.

The prophecy fulfilled: V. 4. **All this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying,** v. 5. **Tell ye the daughter of Sion, Behold, thy King cometh unto thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass, and a colt, the foal of an ass.** This, the entire occurrence, with all its single incidents, was done in just this way in order that the words of the prophet, Zech. 9, 9, might be fulfilled. Cp. Is. 62, 11. The quotation of the evangelist is a free one, embodying all that the Old Testament says of the meekness and lowliness of this King of kings. Christ here discouraged all carnal, vulgar Messianic ideas and hopes. Not in the manner of a conqueror-hero, as the worldly-minded Jerusalemites expected, but on an ass, and that the foal of an ass, He made His entry into the city which was soon to reject Him altogether. It was a last great day of mercy for the city, that all the inhabitants might know the Redeemer, but they did not consider what pertained to their peace. All the greater should be the impression which the coming of the King of Grace into the hearts of His believers should make upon them. "And this it is that the evangelist admonishes to preach when he says: 'Tell ye the daughter of Sion, Behold, thy King cometh unto thee, meek'; as though he would say: He comes for thy benefit, for thy peace, for the salvation and joy of thy heart; and since they did not believe that, he prophesies that it should be spoken and preached. Whosoever but believes that Christ comes in this way has Him thus. O what preaching, singular and at this time almost unknown! Mark well each single word. The word 'Behold' is a word of joy and admonition, and refers to a thing which one has expected long and anxiously. 'Thy King,' who destroys the tyrant of thy conscience, namely, the Law, and rules thee in peace and a pleasant manner, by giving thee forgiveness of sins and the power to perform the Law. 'Thy,' that is, promised to thee, for whom thou hast waited, whom thou, laden with sin as thou wast, hast called, for whom thou hast sighed. 'He comes,' voluntarily, without thy merit, out of great love, for thou hast not led Him hither nor hast thou ascended into heaven, thou hast not earned His advent, but He has left His property and has come to thee, the unworthy one, who under the compulsion and rule of the Law hast earned nothing but punishment with thy many sins. 'To thee' He comes, that is, for thy benefit, in whatever thou hast need of Him. He comes to seek thine own, only to serve thee and to do thee good; He does not

come for His own benefit, not to seek His own from thee, as the Law formerly did; since thou hast not what the Law demands, therefore He comes to give thee what is His, and expects nothing from thee, but that thou permit thy sins to be taken from thee and thyself to be saved. . . . The evangelist uses only the word 'meek,' and omits the words 'just and having salvation'; for in the Hebrew language the word 'poor' is very closely related with the word 'meek' or 'gentle,' for the Hebrews call a person poor that is poor, humble, meek, restless, and downcast in spirit; as all Christian believers in general are called that way in Scriptures. For he is truly gentle and meek who does not consider the harm done to his neighbor in any other light but done to himself, takes it to heart accordingly, and has compassion on him. As such a person, that was poor and martyred for our sake, and truly meek, the evangelist describes Christ, who comes tortured with our evil and is ready to help us with the greatest of meekness and love.165)

The triumphant entry: V. 6. **And the disciples went, and did as Jesus commanded them,** v. 7. **and brought the ass and the colt, and put on them their clothes, and they set Him thereon.** V. 8. **And a very great multitude spread their garments in the way; others cut down branches from the trees, and strewed them in the way.** V. 9. **And the multitudes that went before, and that followed, cried, saying, Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest!** While Jesus was waiting at the entrance to Bethphage, the disciples carried out His command, receiving, incidentally, further confirmation of their trust in Him. Obedience to His Word will never cause a Christian to be ashamed. The animals, as they were brought to the Lord, were not saddled. But now a peculiar ecstasy took hold of the disciples and of the ever-increasing multitude. Quickly taking off their outer garments, a kind of loose coat, they spread these upon the foal, to make a seat for their Master. The example of the first disciples was infectious. All the rest of them, as well as a large number of the people, took their garments and spread them out on the way, as if to receive an emperor, a mighty king. And still the excitement spread. Since many of the customs of the great festivals were, upon occasion, transferred from one to the other, the people did not hesitate, also in this instance, to borrow the usages of the Feast of Tabernacles. Some of them cut down or tore down branches from the trees along the way, and cast them down to make a leafy carpet before Him. But the climax of the exultation was reached at the summit of the Mount of Olives. Here the ranks of the early singers were swelled by great crowds of newcomers, and while the latter turned and marched ahead, the others followed behind the Lord. And in antiphonal shouting the joyous acclaim of the people rose up to heaven as they chanted sections from the great Hallel, with the doxology used on great festivals, Ps. 118, 25. 26. They openly proclaim Him as the Son of David, as the true Messiah, they wish Him blessing and salvation from above. Far and wide, the people joined in this demonstration in honor of the lowly Nazarene. They gladly sacrificed their holiday garments, their festival ornaments, they brought the palm branches and waved the green fronds of early spring to give full expression to their joy, to their confession of their Lord, the Messiah. It is most unfortunate that this exultation was only temporary, and quickly forgotten. And yet the Spirit of the Lord had here, for a short while at least, taken hold of the people. God wanted thus to give testimony in behalf of His Son, before the shame and the horror of the cross would be laid upon Him. And it was prophetic of the time when every tongue would confess that Jesus is the Lord.

Reception in Jerusalem: V. 10. **And when He was come into Jerusalem, all the city was moved, saying, Who is this?** V. 11. **And the multitude said, This is Jesus, the Prophet of Nazareth of Galilee.** The demonstration before Jesus continued all the way down the western slope of the Mount of Olives, across the Valley of the Kidron, and into the very city of Jerusalem itself. As usual under the circumstances, the excitement spread rapidly and carried many with it that knew nothing of the actual reason. Even the city of Jerusalem, with its multitudes of festival pilgrims, was most violently moved, as by an earthquake. The popular enthusiasm was transmitted to all classes of people. Every one began to question as to the identity of the man who thus came into the city. The inhabitants of Jerusalem had had plenty of opportunity to know Him, but many had forgotten the great miracles done in their midst, others had come from a distance, and had never come into contact with His glorious work and message. Everywhere it was openly heralded before Him that He was Jesus, the Prophet from Nazareth in Galilee. Their knowledge was not at all clear, and those that had a clear-cut understanding hesitated about making such a public profession of the same. To proclaim and confess Him as the Messiah was a dangerous undertaking in the chief city of the Jews, since the high priests and members of the council had openly threatened such confessors with excommunication. Thus even to-day many that are willing enough to proclaim Christ in the midst of a great multitude, are unwilling to stand up for Jesus when the individual confession might cause them unpleasantness and persecution.

165) Luther, 12, 1001—1003.

Christ Visits the Temple. Matt. 21, 12—16.

V. 12. **And Jesus went into the Temple of God, and cast out all them that sold and bought in the Temple, and overthrew the tables of the money-changers, and the seats of them that sold doves,** v. 13. **and said unto them, My house shall be called the house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves.** During the first days of this, His last week in lowliness on earth, Jesus made Bethany His headquarters, spending the days in the city and returning to His friends overnight. It was on Monday of Holy Week that Jesus was most grievously hurt and offended by the state of affairs in the Temple, as once before, John 2, 13—17. Originally, every person that wanted to bring a sacrifice to the Temple took the animal from his own herd or flock. But in the course of time there was a change made, chiefly due to the various restrictions as to the fitness of the various animals. The Jewish officials in Jerusalem took advantage of the situation by starting a market right at the Temple-gates and in the Temple-courts. There were the various sacrificial animals, such as bullocks, sheep, goats, doves, and others, all guaranteed to measure up to the standard of Levitical purity. And since this business involved a good deal of money-changing, a formal bank business had developed within a stone's throw of the holy place. A strange scene: The lowing of the cattle, the bleating of the sheep and lambs, the cooing of the doves, the cry of the venders, the clink of money, — all this in the place which was sacred to the name of God. Add to this the fact that the priests were often deriving benefit from this arrangement by drawing down a nice percentage for the concession, as Luther says,[166] and we have a picture of commercialism in the Church such as can hardly be duplicated, although it has more than once been equaled in the Church. "Avarice covered with the veil of religion is one of those things on which Christ looks with the greatest indignation in His Church. Merchandise of holy things, simoniacal presentations, fraudulent exchanges, a mercenary spirit in sacred functions; ecclesiastical employments obtained by flattery, service, or attendance, or by anything which is instead of money; collations, nominations, and elections made through any other motive than the glory of God; these are all fatal and damnable profanations, of which those in the Temple were only a shadow."[167] A holy indignation took hold upon Jesus at the sight of this blasphemous spirit and its evidence. With the authority and dignity of the outraged Son of God He strode into the court. Roughly He pushed aside and cast out the merchants, impatiently He knocked down the tables of the petty bankers and of the dove-sellers, incidentally reminding the people of the words of the prophets, Is. 56, 7; Jer. 7, 11. As a house of prayer the Temple of Solomon had been built for all nations, 1 Kings 8, and a house of prayer the present structure was to be as well. But they, by their mercenary spirit and practises, had made it a den of thieves, in which cheating and overreaching was the order of the day.

The confession of the children: V. 14. **And the blind and the lame came to Him in the Temple; and He healed them.** V. 15. **And when the chief priests and scribes saw the wonderful things that He did, and the children crying in the Temple and saying, Hosanna to the Son of David! they were sore displeased,** v. 16. **and said unto Him, Hearest Thou what these say? And Jesus saith unto them, Yea; have ye never read, Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings Thou hast perfected praise?** Even in these last days the Lord continued the work of His healing ministry, in the very courts of the Temple, the Court of the Gentiles being used for various meetings. And the chief priests and scribes, fearing the multitudes, could at this time do nothing, although they were boiling with murderous indignation. But when the children that had come up with their parents to witness the Temple-service and to stay for the Passover, began to chant the song which had so grated upon the ears of the Pharisees on the day before; when their treble voices were lifted in the Hosanna of adoration and supplication, it was too much for the Jewish officials. Angrily they demanded of Him whether He did not hear. In reality they meant to say: Why do you not resent the blasphemy? For to be silent means to assent, — and incidentally to confess that their song was the truth. But Jesus had His answer ready. They accuse Him of deafness, of not hearing; He accuses them of blindness, of not being able to see, or of a poor memory in not being able to remember. It was plainly written, Ps. 8, 2, that babes and sucklings would sing the praises of the Messiah, and He accepted their confession with gladness. It confirmed the laudatory statements of the multitude in regard to His Messiahship. It was a tribute to His mission also to little children. "So absolutely is He pleased with their praise. He accepts it, and permits Himself to be proclaimed a king in Israel, and that the kingdom of Israel was His own kingdom and people. That makes them angry and foolish; that the high priests and great lords at Jerusalem could not suffer; that disturbs them most of all that they cry in the Temple, 'Hosanna!' They are not concerned too much about the miracles; they permitted Him to make the blind to see, the lame to be straight, and to do more such miracles; but that He should want to come riding into the city with singing and pomp, and does not concern Himself about them, whom He should have

166) Luther, 7, 1054.

167) Quesnel, quoted in Clarke, *Commentary*, 5, 202.

asked for permission, that did not suit them at all. For all schismatics can easily judge the other man; they are waspish people, see the mote in the eyes of others, but are not aware of the beam in their own eyes. They think that the performance of miracles is indeed something, but to sing, for all of that, that He is a king and lord, that does not look well in a prophet. If He had first gone to the high priests and asked for permission, all might have been well; but that He does it without their permission, and that the poor bungler and beggar, who did not even own an ass, comes out so strongly against their will, and does not do so much as to look at them for permission, that is intolerable to them, that vexes them." 168)

The Cursing of the Fig-Tree.

Matt. 21, 17—22.

V. 17. **And He left them, and went out of the city into Bethany; and He lodged there.** V. 18. **Now in the morning, as He returned into the city, He hungered.** V. 19. **And when He saw a fig-tree in the way, He came to it, and found nothing thereon but leaves only, and said unto it, Let no fruit grow on thee henceforward forever. And presently the fig-tree withered away.** Matthew here combines the story of two morning journeys from Bethany, for the sake of the emphasis upon the whole. So far as the enemies were concerned, they were silenced by the quotation of Jesus, they had nothing more to say openly. And the Lord was permitted to go unhindered back and forth between Jerusalem and Bethany. It was on Monday morning that Jesus was hungry on the trip of about two miles to the capital. A fig-tree, standing by itself, in full foliage, suggested fruit to eat. But when He stepped up to it, He found nothing upon it but leaves only. The incident suggested the possibility of a lesson to Jesus. He might be able to bring to the understanding of His disciples the antitype of this fig-tree, the high priests and the scribes in their unbelieving conduct, yea, the whole Jewish nation. And Jesus had also a second lesson in mind, which He imparted to His disciples directly. At His curse the fig-tree at once withered away from the roots up. Apparently, the disciples did not take special note of the fact at this time. They went on to Jerusalem with the Lord, who in His zeal for His work had not even taken time to eat breakfast at Bethany.

The lesson of the dry tree: V. 20. **And when the disciples saw it, they marveled, saying, How soon is the fig-tree withered away!** V. 21. **Jesus answered and said unto them, Verily I say unto you, If ye have faith and doubt not, ye shall not only do this which is done to the fig-tree, but also if ye shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea, it shall be done.** V. 22. **And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive.** On Tuesday morning the attention of the disciples was drawn to the single fig-tree, standing there with its leaves all shriveled up, Mark 11, 20. They expressed their surprise to Jesus, who then gave them a lesson drawn from this incident, similar to that of chapter 17, 20. Faith in God is essential for the disciple of Christ, absolute trust in the almighty power of God, who has all creation in His hand. It must be a faith without the slightest doubt in the efficacy of prayer, with full reliance upon the omnipotence of God, upon God's command and promise, chapter 17, 20. To such a faith the matter of the fig-tree is a small matter, not really worth speaking about. To such a faith the removing of mountains, the rooting up of mountains, such as the Mount of Olives, is a thing of certainty. All difficulties, all perplexities, must yield before the conquering power of faith. And it is the faith in the merciful willingness of God that is the chief essential of the correct, the efficacious prayer. Christ ever and again emphasizes these two points: unwavering faith and importunate persistence.

The Authority of Christ. Matt. 21, 23—27.

The question of the elders: V. 23. **And when He was come into the Temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came unto Him as He was teaching, and said, By what authority doest Thou these things? and who gave Thee this authority?** The members of the Jewish Sanhedrin, the Great Council of the Jewish Church, were ever jealous of their rights and suspicious of any one that dared to think and act for himself. The point of their question was: If you claim the authority to purge the Temple, if you openly teach and heal in the Temple, give us an account of your prophetic character, prove that you have a prophet's mission from God. It was a foolish resentment, one which incidentally laid bare the blindness of the rulers. For Jesus had given countless examples of His prophetic power, both by miracles and by such authoritative preaching as no other teacher in Israel possessed. Their demand is twofold: Give us evidence that you actually possess this authority; then satisfy us also as to the source of the authority you are using. They wanted Him to render an account for whatever acts He had done in His official ministry.

The answer: V. 24. **And Jesus answered and said unto them, I also will ask you one thing, which if ye tell Me, I in like wise will tell you by what authority I do these things.** V. 25. **The baptism of John, whence was it, from heaven or of men? And they reasoned with themselves, saying, If we shall say, From heaven, He will**

168) Luther, 7, 1075.

say unto us, Why did ye not then believe him? V. 26. **But if we shall say, Of men, we fear the people; for all hold John as a prophet.** V. 27. **And they answered Jesus and said, We cannot tell. And He said unto them, Neither tell I you by what authority I do these things.** Christ's method of answering question with question again proved effective. He wanted information regarding only one thing. If the answer to this question would be forthcoming, He would be pleased to give them the account they desired. But His question placed them in a dilemma, by what authority John the Baptist had performed the work of his ministry, and especially his baptizing. They considered the matter very carefully among themselves, they carefully weighed a possible answer which would not compromise them. But there was only this alternative: In one case they invited a censure of Christ, in the other, the hatred of the people. If John had divine authority for his baptism, there was no excuse for their opposition to him, for their refusal to believe. If, on the other hand, they should dare to express their belief that John had no divine authority, the hatred of the people could easily have made it more than unpleasant for them. And so they preferred to give no answer, thereby absolving Jesus from the necessity of answering their question. There was a distinct reproof in the answer of Jesus. If they had to admit that John had divine authority, how much more did the teaching and the miracles of Jesus argue for His being sent by God. Unbelief is immoral. The unbelievers cannot deny the evidence of Scripture, but do not want to accept the truth; and therefore lies, evasion, and excuses are their only weapons.

The Parable of the Two Sons.

Matt. 21, 28—32.

V. 28. **But what think ye? A certain man had two sons; and he came to the first and said, Son, go work to-day in my vineyard.** V. 29. **He answered and said, I will not; but afterward he repented and went.** V. 30. **And he came to the second and said likewise. And he answered and said, I go, sir; and went not.** V. 31a. **Whether of them twain did the will of his father? They say unto Him, The first.** The moral distinction made here by Christ was one which the Pharisees admitted themselves, and therefore the truth must have been all the bitterer for them. Both sons were approached in the same manner, with the same words. The one piously says that he will go and work, but, in spite of his apparent eagerness and politeness, sets aside both the fatherly authority and the filial obedience. The other is rude and unmannerly upon being approached, apparently full of sulky disobedience, and yet, upon second thought, he goes and works for the father. The answer of the scribes could, therefore, not have been different.

The application: V. 31b. **Jesus saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, That the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you.** V. 32. **For John came unto you in the way of righteousness, and ye believed him not; but the publicans and the harlots believed him; and ye, when ye had seen it, repented not afterward, that ye might believe him.** By giving the answer to the question of Jesus, the rulers of the Jews had pronounced their own sentence. John, in his message and in his life, was a preacher of righteousness, none greater than he. Yet the outcasts of Jewish society, those that had been expelled from the synagog and were no longer members of the Jewish Church, they gave heed to his admonition to repent. They were, after all, obedient to the will of the heavenly Father. But the Pharisees and scribes, the chief priests and elders, heeded neither the preaching of John nor that of Christ. They made a practise of having God's Word and Law in their mouths, but their heart was far from real obedience to the will of the Father in heaven. A mere head-and-mouth Christianity is actually nothing but disobedience to God. But a poor sinner that realizes his guilt and repents of his sin, is acknowledged and treated by God as an obedient child, and his former sins are no longer remembered.

The Parable of the Wicked Husbandmen.

Matt. 21, 33—46.

V. 33. **Hear another parable: There was a certain householder, which planted a vineyard, and hedged it round about, and digged a wine-press in it, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into a far country.** V. 34. **And when the time of the fruit drew near, he sent his servants to the husbandmen that they might receive the fruits of it.** V. 35. **And the husbandmen took his servants, and beat one, and killed another, and stoned another.** V. 36. **Again, he sent other servants, more than the first; and they did unto them likewise.** Without giving the Jews an opportunity to remonstrate, Jesus, with great emotion, and with the deliberate intention of making them see their malice and wickedness, introduces another lesson. The picture He draws was one with which His hearers were very familiar, and He knew that they could also see the meaning at once, since the Old Testament speaks so often of the vineyard of the Church. Christ gives a detailed description of the pains taken by the ruler, the owner of the estate. Cp. Is. 5, 1—7; Ps. 80, 9—11. His object was to obtain not merely fruitfulness, but fruit of the very best kind. He planted a hedge round about to keep out the wild beasts that might root up and tear

down the vines. He built a wine-press, where the grapes could be trodden out, and a vat, where the juice could be stored. He erected a watch-tower against thieves among man and beast. In short, he did all that could be expected of the careful owner of a vineyard. He now rented out the vineyard on shares, since he was obliged to make a long journey. But the renters were wicked. Instead of paying the share of the fruit which belonged to the lord, they despitefully entreated and even killed the servants that were sent to bring the rent to the lord. Christ purposely pictures the wickedness with dramatic intensity.

V. 37. **But last of all he sent unto them his son, saying, They will reverence my son.** V. 38. **But when the husbandmen saw the son, they said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and let us seize on his inheritance.** V. 39. **And they caught him, and cast him out of the vineyard, and slew him.** V. 40. **When the lord, therefore, of the vineyard cometh, what will he do unto those husbandmen?** V. 41. **They say unto Him, He will miserably destroy those wicked men, and will let out his vineyard unto other husbandmen, which shall render him the fruits in their seasons.** The patience of the master was still not exhausted. He determined upon one last measure to bring those husbandmen to their senses and, incidentally, to obtain the fruits of his garden. He thought they would surely reverence, show the proper respect to, his son, with deep shame for their former conduct and an earnest desire to regain the trust of the master. But the wickedness of these husbandmen exceeded the ordinary measure. With truly devilish malice they resolved to kill the heir. By removing the heir, they hoped to take the heritage without opposition, to seize it as their own. Having reached the climax of His story, Jesus paused to ask the opinion of His hearers as to the fate of those husbandmen when the lord would return. Without hesitation came the answer that he would most miserably put to death those miserable and wicked servants, and entrust his vineyard to honest husbandmen that would give the stipulated rental at the proper time. In giving this answer, in which Jesus heartily concurred, the members of the Jewish council either put up a bold front in apparent indignation over such outrageous wickedness, though they felt that the parable was meant for them, or they were really too blind to see the connection of the Lord's words. But in either event their judgment was a sentence of destruction upon themselves and all those of their people that willingly followed them in their wickedness, in their rejection of the Savior.

For the explanation of the parable is evident at a glance. God Himself is the Ruler of the household. The vineyard, as in the Old Testament passages, is His Church, which He had planted in the midst of the people of Israel, His chosen people. He had given to this nation the full measure of His goodness and mercy. He had drawn a hedge about them against the heathen, the ceremonial law, the theocratic form of government. He had given them the strong watch-tower of the kingdom of David and his descendants. He had given them all the external advantages which would enable them to prove themselves a holy nation. But the fruit He expected was not forthcoming. He sent Samuel and other prophets at the time of the judges. He sent more and greater prophets than before with powerful preaching and great signs and wonders. But their abuse of His messengers increased with the passing of time, as in the case of Elijah, Jeremiah, Zechariah, 2 Chron. 24, 20; Matt. 23, 37; Jer. 3, 20; Heb. 11, 36—38; Luke 11, 47—51. Last of all He sent His only, His well-beloved Son, hoping that they would recognize Him as His personal representative and give Him the respect and reverence due Him. But they hardened their hearts against His teaching and against His miracles, held councils of hatred against Him, and finally put Him to death, after a formal excommunication. Thus the husbandmen, the prominent members of the Jewish people, and especially their chief priests and elders, the scribes and Pharisees, rejected the counsel of God toward themselves and brought down damnation upon their own heads. And the vineyard with its fruit, the kingdom of God with the riches of His mercy and love, was given to the Gentiles, who accepted it and have since enjoyed its blessings and, in a measure at least, paid the fruits that God demanded, in good works.

The application: V. 42. **Jesus saith unto them, Did ye never read in the Scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner; this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes?** V. 43. **Therefore I say unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.** V. 44. **And whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken; but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder.** Christ does not mince words, but applies the parable with merciless power. He reminds the members of the Jewish council of the words of the prophet, Ps. 118, 22. The Jews were the chosen builders of the spiritual temple of God. But one condition of their continuing in the work was the acceptance of the stone which was selected by God to be the headstone of the corner. By the miracle of Christ's resurrection their rejection of Him was judged. Christ has become the corner-stone of the New Testament Church, the foundation of the great spiritual structure which will be completed on the last day, Eph. 2, 20—22. Addressing Himself directly to them, Jesus tells them the doom they

may expect: forfeiture of all their privileges in the Kingdom, which will be given to the heathen world. And there is still another word which applies here, that of the stone of stumbling and of the rock of offense, Is. 8, 14. If any one takes offense at this Corner-stone and falls on Him, he will be shattered; but if the Stone should fall upon some one by the judgment of God, he will be crushed to powder and scattered to the winds, Luke 2, 34. 35. On the last day all those that refused obedience to the heavenly King and rejected His Son, thus despising the grace gained also for them, will find themselves ground to pieces by the inexorable justice of God. "But to be built on the Stone is to believe on Christ that He is our Savior. If, then, I am called to the Gospel, and accept it and believe it, then I am one of the stones laid upon Him and am considered saved, not for the sake of my merit and works, ... but that I am built and laid on the Corner-stone, which is done through the true Christian faith, as the children pray: I believe on Jesus Christ, who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of Mary, the virgin, suffered under Pilate; He is the polished and proved Corner-stone. If I believe in Him, then I am built upon Him and will be saved, as Isaiah says: He that trusts in Him will not be ashamed; there the prophet explains clearly that being built upon Him means to trust in Christ and believe in Him." 169)

The result: V. 45. **And when the chief priests and Pharisees had heard His parables, they perceived that He spake of them.** V. 46. **But when they sought to lay hands on Him, they feared the multitude, because they took Him for a prophet.** Their actual or assumed denseness finally had to give way to understanding, with the application made in such a blunt manner. But instead of turning from the wickedness of their ways, the bitterness of their hatred is only intensified. They would have taken Jesus away on the spot, had they not feared the people. An arrest at this time would have caused a riot, since the great multitudes gathered together in the courts of the Temple and throughout the city firmly held that He was a prophet, and would not have permitted harm to come upon Him.

Summary. *Jesus makes a triumphant entry into Jerusalem, drives out the merchants and money-changers from the Temple, accepts the praise of the children, curses the fig-tree, upholds His authority, and tells the parables of the two sons and of the wicked husbandmen.*

169) Luther, 7, 1102.

CHAPTER 22.

The Parable of the Marriage Feast.

Matt. 22, 1—14.

V. 1. **And Jesus answered and spake unto them again by parables, and said,** v. 2. **The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his son,** v. 3. **and sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding; and they would not come.** V. 4. **Again he sent forth other servants, saying, Tell them which are bidden, Behold, I have prepared my dinner; my oxen and my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready; come unto the marriage.** A vivid description of the elaborate preparations for an Oriental wedding-feast, to point a moral in the matter of the kingdom of God. For Christ always had a definite purpose in telling His parables, in most cases to teach the proper qualification for becoming a member of His great kingdom. "Learn first of all that the kingdom of heaven is the kingdom of Christ, our Lord, where the Word and faith are present. In this kingdom we have the life in hope and are, according to the Word and faith, pure from sins and free from death and hell, though we are still retarded by this old hull and lazy flesh. The hull is not yet torn away, the flesh is not yet removed; that is still to be done, then there will be for us nothing but life, righteousness, and salvation." 170) In its external form, in its appearance in this world, this kingdom is like unto a man that was a great king, a mighty ruler, who prepared a marriage-feast for his son. Such a wedding-festival was not an affair of an hour or two, but often lasted for days, Judg. 14, 17. At the appointed time, servants were sent out to announce that fact to those that had received an invitation, probably the princes, the rich and powerful people of the kingdom. This second calling seems to agree exactly with Eastern custom, Esther 6, 14. The result, whether by common consent or by individual meanness, was a flat refusal. But the king was patient. He sent other servants with a more urgent message for the invited guests. They are given the very words to commend the feast, to stimulate desire for its offering. The attention of the invited guests should be called to the fact that the midday meal, with which the festivities began, was even now fully ready for them. The oxen and the fatted rams had been slaughtered and cooked, nothing of the usual delights of the table was missing. The wealth of the king had overlooked nothing in the endeavor to honor both himself and his guests.

The rejection: V. 5. **But they made light of it, and went their ways, one to his farm,**

170) Luther, 13, 926.

another to his merchandise. V. 6. And the remnant took his servants, and entreated them spitefully, and slew them. V. 7. But when the king heard thereof, he was wroth; and he sent forth his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city. Here was a case of studied insolence and insult. They were indifferent to the urgent call, they paid absolutely no attention to it, in the majority of cases. They turned away and devoted themselves to their own private affairs, the landholder to his farm, the merchant to his store. But a few of the invited guests were not satisfied with merely indicating their disapproval of the king and their contempt for the wedding-feast in this fashion. They vented their spite on the messengers. Having laid hold on them, they treated them with every mark of contempt, and finally killed them. These were acts of open rebellion, naturally followed by war. Deeply angered, the king sent out his armies and punished the murderers by taking their life in turn and by burning their town. The refusal to come to the wedding-feast, together with the acts of violence against the servants, constituted acts of gross disobedience, which were justly punished in this way.

New guests: V. 8. **Then saith he to his servants, The wedding is ready, but they which were bidden were not worthy.** V. 9. **Go ye, therefore, into the highways, and as many as ye shall find, bid to the marriage.** V. 10. **So those servants went out into the highways, and gathered together all, as many as they found, both bad and good; and the wedding was furnished with guests.** *Then*, when the report of the failure of his servants to persuade the former guests was made. Time was pressing; great hurry was demanded. So they should go out on the highways, to the place where there is a crossing over of roads, either a crossroads from which the roads radiate in *every* direction, or a place near the gates where the roads from all directions *ran together*. In either case, many people would be passing by in just a little while, and the chance of finding guests would be much greater. No care should be exercised by the servants to make a careful selection, especially not so far as nationality was concerned: The unworthy guests should be replaced as rapidly as possible by others, whomever they might find. And the servants followed the command literally. Going out on the streets and roads, they brought together all whom they found, bad as well as good, and the nuptial assembly of those that were to partake of the feast was made complete.

The missing wedding-garment: V. 11. **And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding-garment;** v. 12. **and he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding-garment? And he was speechless.** V. 13. **Then said the king to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.** V. 14. **For many are called, but few are chosen.** The king was naturally pleased over the success of his plan, and as soon as the guests were placed and the wedding-feast was in progress, he came in to welcome them all. But while passing down between the rows of tables his attention was drawn to one man who, although reclining with the rest at a table and partaking of the food, yet was not clothed in a proper wedding-garment. This was not only inexcusable, it was insulting. For the guests of Oriental kings were at all times, but especially upon such an occasion, provided with festal garments, and the accidental guest above all was taken care of in this respect. It was natural, also, and in keeping with the dignity of the occasion that the guests should take unusual care with their dress, in order not to seem insensible to the honor bestowed upon them. No wonder that the king's surprised inquiry as to the way in which he managed to slip in unobserved, when, as he knew, a wedding-garment was required and might have been obtained for the asking, caused the guilty fellow literally to be strangled in his speech and unable to say a single word in explanation or defense. It was a case of foolishly and deliberately despising the bounty, the largess, of the king. And so the king passed summary sentence. The servants received orders to bind the guilty one hand and foot and to thrust him into the outer darkness of the dungeon, where he would have plenty of time to repent of his folly with weeping and gnashing of teeth. For, adds Jesus, many are called, but few are chosen.

The lesson of this parable is similar to that of the previous one, and was probably understood by the Jews in its first part. In the second part it went beyond the Jewish Church and contains a warning for all time. God Himself is the king. The wedding-feast is that of the Messiah's kingdom, the marriage of the Lamb. The first invitation was issued to the chosen people of the Old Testament, the nation of the Jews. The prophets came to them in increasing numbers, with increasing clearness of message. Then came John the Baptist, Christ Himself, the apostles, with their urgent call to repentance and salvation. But the answer was indifference, hatred, blasphemy, murder. Then God's patience was exhausted, then His judgment was executed upon Jerusalem and upon the Jewish nation, the Romans under Vespasian and Titus laying siege to their capital and destroying both Temple and city, 70 A. D. Since that time the Lord has faithfully attempted to get other guests for His wedding-feast. His messengers have gone forth on the highways and byways of the Gentile nations throughout the world. The Christian Church has spread

to practically every country of the earth. Men of every tongue have been assembled in the great hall of the Lamb's wedding-feast. Good and bad, hypocrites and sincere believers, are joined in the outward communion known as the visible Church. But the time of the King's reckoning is coming. He has provided, through His Son Jesus Christ, a wedding-garment of spotless righteousness and purity for every sinner that is called to the feast. His mercy and grace are indeed free for all men, but they cannot partake of the meal without having first accepted this festal garment to cover the filth and nakedness of their sin. He will lay bare the deceit, if not before, then on the great Day of Judgment. And the insult to the love of God will be properly punished when every person that puts his trust in his own merit and works will be cast into the dungeon of hell with its everlasting torments. "That will be the punishment that the time of visitation has not been recognized nor accepted, that we were invited, had Sacrament, Baptism, Gospel, absolution, and still did not believe it, nor made ourselves of use. Would to God that the dear Lord would teach us thoroughly and bring us to that point that we would realize what great mercy we have received in being invited to such a blessed feast, where we shall find salvation from sin, devil, death, and eternal wailing! He that will not accept this with thanks, but despises such grace, shall have eternal death instead of it. For one of the two it must be: Either receive the Gospel and believe and be saved, or do not believe and be condemned eternally." 171)

The Question Concerning Tribute.

Matt. 22, 15—22.

Insincere flattery: V. 15. **Then went the Pharisees and took counsel how they might entangle Him in His talk.** V. 16. **And they sent out unto Him their disciples with the Herodians, saying, Master, we know that Thou art true, and teachest the way of God in truth, neither carest Thou for any man; for Thou regardest not the person of men.** The Pharisees had again felt the sting of the application in the last parable, and it did not improve their temper. Force was out of the question on account of the people, so they contemplated ways and means to find a catch-question, the answer to which could be construed so as to invite either the hatred of the common people or the investigation of the Roman government. They deliberately plan and study out some question which would serve this purpose. Having found one which, in their opinion, was suitable, they first tried to divert the attention of Jesus by placing the sand of flattery in His eyes, — a bungling attempt at best when one remembers the omniscience of Christ. They sent some of their own disciples with the Herodians. The latter belonged to a sect or clique related to the Sadducees in belief, but more strongly political in organization. According to the most trustworthy accounts, they came into existence at the time of Herod the Great, and encouraged the idea of a national kingdom under the rule of the Herodian dynasty. With learning, wealth, and influence at their command, they were not to be despised as allies by the Pharisees and Sadducees, with their political hopes. They seem to have been drafted for this delegation in order not to make the design too apparent. The strangest part was that their words were absolutely true. Jesus, being the Truth Himself, did indeed teach the way of God and to God in truth; He was entirely independent of all people and had not the slightest hesitation, if need be, to speak His opinion before any man. But in the mouth of these enemies these facts became hollow mockery and malice, a false flattery calculated to deceive and dupe. It was most insincere, devilish hypocrisy.

The question and the reply: V. 17. **Tell us therefore, What thinkest Thou? Is it lawful to give tribute unto Caesar, or not?** V. 18. **But Jesus perceived their wickedness and said, Why tempt ye Me, ye hypocrites?** V. 19. **Show Me the tribute-money. And they brought unto Him a penny.** V. 20. **And He saith unto them, Whose is this image and superscription?** V. 21. **They say unto Him, Caesar's. Then saith He unto them, Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's, and unto God the things that are God's.** V. 22. **When they had heard these words, they marveled, and left Him, and went their way.** They come out with their question as though they were altogether innocent and harmless, merely asking for the opinion of a respected teacher, desiring to know whether it is the right, the proper thing, whether it should be done thus, to pay tribute or poll-tax to the Roman emperor. The difficulty of the question lay in this, that it was put from the religious point of view: Would it not seem that the tax-payer is in danger of coming into conflict with God and with his duty toward the Church? They expected, of course, that Jesus would declare against the paying of the tax, in which case they would have had reason to denounce Him before the Roman governor as a rebel. On the other hand, if He favored the paying of this most objectionable tax, they could easily cast the suspicion upon Him as though He were a friend and agent of the Roman government and had no proper love for the privileges of the Jews as the chosen people of God. But Christ knew their wickedness. He tells them that they are hypocrites with their attempt to mask their attack under the guise of sincere compliments, poor actors in tempting Him from the path of His ministry.

171) Luther, 13, 938.

He demands to be shown the coin of the census, the piece of money which had to be paid for this tax. And when they showed Him a *denarius*, the Roman silver coin with the image and inscription of Caesar, worth about seventeen cents in American money, He quickly gave them His decision: Caesar's give to Caesar, God's to God; a simple and most effective rule for keeping the distinction between Church and State clearly defined. It was an answer which silenced them completely, and should provide the necessary information on this vexed question for all time. God's people should above all give to God due honor and obedience. In those things which concern the Word of God, worship itself, faith, and conscience, we are obedient to God only and pay no attention to objections made by men. But in mere temporal, earthly things, which concern money, possessions, body, life, we obey the government of the country in which we live. "Though they were not worth it, yet the Lord taught them the right way. And with these words He also confirms the temporal sword. They hoped He would condemn it and talk against it; but He does nothing of the kind, but praises the worldly government and commands they should give to it what pertains thereto. Thereby He states His will that there should be government, princes, and lords, to whom we should be obedient, let them be whoever and whatever they will. And we should not ask whether they have the rule and the government with justice and right or with injustice, and hold it thus; we must merely look upon the power and government which is good, for it has been ordained and instituted by God, Rom. 13, 1. Thou dare not abuse the government if thou occasionally be oppressed by princes and tyrants, and they abuse their power which they have from God; they will surely have to give an account of it. The abuse of a thing does not make the thing evil which in itself is good. . . . But what if they should want to take the Gospel from us, or prohibit its preaching? Then thou shalt say: The Gospel and the Word of God I will not give you, neither have ye any power concerning that; for your government is a temporal government over earthly goods, but the Gospel is a spiritual, heavenly possession; therefore your power does not extend over the Gospel and the Word of God. . . . That we shall not yield, for it is the power of God, Rom. 1, 16; 1 Cor. 1, 18, against which even the portals of hell cannot prevail, Matt. 16, 18. Therefore the Lord condenses these two points very nicely, and separates them from each other in one verse, and says: 'Render unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's, and unto God the things that are God's.' To God pertains His honor, that I believe Him to be the true, almighty, and wise God, and confess that He is the Author of everything good. And though I do not give Him this honor, yet He keeps it; thy honoring will neither add to nor detract from it; but in me He is true, almighty, and wise if I consider Him thus and believe that He is just as He has it told about Him. But to the government is due fear, custom, tribute, tax, and obedience. God wants the heart; the body and goods are under the government, over which it should rule in the stead of God." 172)

The Question of the Sadducees.

Matt. 22, 23—33.

V. 23. **The same day came to Him the Sadducees, which say that there is no resurrection, and asked Him,** v. 24. **saying, Master, Moses said, If a man die, having no children, his brother shall marry his wife, and raise up seed unto his brother.** V. 25. **Now there were with us seven brethren; and the first, when he had married a wife, deceased, and, having no issue, left his wife unto his brother;** v. 26. **likewise the second also, and the third, unto the seventh.** V. 27. **And last of all the woman died also.** V. 28. **Therefore, in the resurrection, whose wife shall she be of the seven? For they all had her.** The Herodians and the disciples of the Pharisees had been silenced. But this fact seemed like a challenge to the Sadducees who prided themselves upon their cleverness. It was not merely in a spirit of mischief that these men came, but with the intention of making Christ appear ridiculous. For they themselves, as Matthew remarks, did not believe in the resurrection, and incidentally accepted only the five books of Moses as authentic words of God. Both of which was well known to Jesus, and He here made use of His knowledge to their utter discomfiture. They relate a story which has all the ear-marks of having been invented for the occasion, and cite Moses, Gen. 38, 8; Deut. 25, 5. 6, in support of their question. It was the so-called Levirate marriage to which they had reference, according to which it was ordered, for the preservation of families, that if a man died without male children, his brother should marry the widow, and that the first-born son should be held in the registers to be the son of the dead brother. The Sadducees purposely tell the story in such a way as to bring out the foolishness of the ensuing situation after the resurrection, in their opinion: Whose wife will she be? All of the brothers have equal rights.

Christ's answer: V. 29. **Jesus answered and said unto them, Ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God.** V. 30. **For in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven.** In an entirely dispassionate way, but with crushing emphasis, Jesus gives them His answer: Ye are altogether wrong, and that because ye know neither the plain facts of Scripture nor the power of

172) Luther, 11, 1813. 1814; 13, 2508—2514.

God. According to the first, they should have known that the fact of the resurrection is stated in the Old Testament. According to the second, they should have known that God is able to raise from the dead. Note: Their question itself is a secondary consideration with Christ; the motive for the question concerns Him far more. And so far as their story goes, the difficulty which, they sneeringly imply, exists in case there is a resurrection, is by no means so great. In heaven, Christ tells them, the resurrected believers will be sexless, like the angels, since there is no longer any need for marriage, both the procreation of children and the sexual desires of the body being things of the past.

Proof for the resurrection: V. 31. **But as touching the resurrection of the dead, have ye not read that which was spoken unto you by God, saying,** v. 32. **I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living.** V. 33. **And when the multitude heard this, they were astonished at His doctrine.** A bit of Bible explanation, which is as irrefutable as it is surprising. Christ's manner implies a censure of their reading the books of Moses without understanding: Ye are ignorant of the very books which ye profess to hold sacred, in which the Lord speaks directly to you. It was on Mount Horeb that the Lord said these words to Moses, Ex. 3, 6. 16. If the patriarchs were dead, body and soul, if they were annihilated and no longer in existence, how could God call Himself their God, He, who is the God of the living only? The resurrected dead, according to their souls, live with God in heaven; they are truly alive, and on the last day their souls will be reunited with the body to live in the abode of the angels forever, and in much the same manner. No wonder the people, the many that crowded around the disputing parties, were very much surprised at this bit of clear doctrine. "Behold, who would have thought that in these short, simple, common words so much would be contained, and would yield such a fine, rich sermon, yea, a great and mighty book, which could be derived therefrom. Which words they had known well, and yet had not believed that in the entire books of Moses a single word concerning the resurrection of the dead was to be found; for which reason they adhered to Moses only, and repudiated the prophets, though these took all their sermons on the chief articles of Christ's faith from Moses." 173)

The Silencing of the Pharisees.

Matt. 22, 34—46.

Information asked and given: V. 34. **But when the Pharisees had heard that He had put the Sadducees to silence, they were gathered together.** V. 35. **Then one of them, which was a lawyer, asked Him a question, tempting Him, and saying,** v. 36. **Master, which is the great commandment in the Law?** V. 37. **Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord, thy God, with all thy heart and with all thy soul and with all thy mind.** V. 38. **This is the first and great commandment.** V. 39. **And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.** V. 40. **On these two commandments hang all the Law and the prophets.** The Sadducees had been most effectually silenced, so that they had nothing more to say. Now the ancient rivalry between the two sects came into play. Should the members of the one succeed in conquering Jesus in an argument, it would be a feather in the cap of the entire party. So the Pharisees determined to find a point in which they could triumph over the Lord. They came together and finally agreed upon a certain question, whose answer would be sure to compromise Him. In a very earnest manner, as though they were most sincere in their longing after truth, their spokesman, one well versed in the Law, put the question: Which is the great commandment, the most important, the one upon which everything depends? His purpose is evident. If Jesus should select some single precept of the Law and place it above the rest, He might be accused of giving to the other commandments a correspondingly low position and denying their validity. But Christ avoids the pitfall by giving a summary of the entire Law, placing that of the first table first and that of the second table immediately beside it. The love toward God is the fulfilment of the Law. But the entire heart, the entire soul, the entire mind must be His, Deut. 6, 5. Reason and intellect, sentiment and passion, thought and will, must be given into His service. "Take, then, before thee this commandment: Thou shalt love the Lord, thy God, with all thy heart, and think upon that, seek after it, and try to understand it, what kind of a law it is, how far thou still art from fufilling this commandment; yea, that thou hast not really begun to fulfil it rightly, namely, to suffer and to do from thy heart what God wants of thee. It is pure hypocrisy if one will crawl into a corner and think: Aye, I want to love God! Oh, how dearly I love God: He is my Father! Oh, how well-intentioned I feel toward Him! and similar things. Indeed, when He does according to our pleasure, we can say many such words, but when once He sends us misfortune and adversity, we no longer consider Him to be a God or a Father. A true love toward God does not act thus, but feels it in the heart and says it with the mouth: Lord God, I am Thy creature, do with me as Thou wilt, it is all the same to me; for I am Thine, that I know; and if it should be Thy will that I should die this hour or suffer some great misfortune, I should suffer

173) Luther, 11, 674; 7, 1125—1127.

it with all my heart; I shall never consider my life, honor, and goods, and whatever I have, higher and greater than Thy will, which shall be well-pleasing to me all my life." (Luther.) This is the first commandment, the one with which sanctification begins. And it is great, since it includes all the other commandments. But the second is like it, Lev. 19, 18. 34, since it brings the love to God, in the fulfilment of His Law, into a visible, tangible form, in the relation toward one's neighbor. As every person by nature has the wish to have only the good and pleasant fall to his lot, so he should endeavor, in all his relations toward His neighbor, to yield and provide for him the same pleasant and agreeable things wherever he can. In these two commandments hang the whole Law and the prophets. The faith of the heart finds its expression in the doing of the will of God, and the sanctification of life begins and ends in love toward God and man. Love is the fulfilling of the Law, Rom. 13, 10.

The counter question of Jesus: V. 41. **While the Pharisees were gathered together Jesus asked them,** v. 42. **saying, What think ye of Christ? Whose son is He? They say unto Him, The Son of David.** The attack of the Pharisees had failed; their very spokesman had been obliged to admit the truth of Christ's answer, Mark 12, 32. 33. But now Christ turns to the attack by proposing a question which would impale His adversaries on the horns of a real dilemma. His question concerns the sonship of Christ, of the Messiah; from what family is He to spring? It is the most momentous subject of investigation before the world, not only at the time of Christ, but at all times. According to the way in which men decide in their estimate of Christ will their fate be decided. A mere head knowledge and lip confession, such as was made here by the Pharisees, who could answer in a mechanical manner glibly enough, is not sufficient for the true believer, as the Lord proceeds to point out in this instance.

Driving home the conclusion: V. 43. **He saith unto them, How, then, doth David in spirit call Him Lord, saying,** v. 44. **The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit Thou on My right hand till I make Thine enemies Thy footstool?** V. 45. **If David, then, call Him Lord, how is He his Son?** V. 46. **And no man was able to answer Him a word, neither durst any man from that day forth ask Him any more questions.** That the Messiah was to be an offspring of David is stated so often in the Old Testament that every Jew was accustomed to call Him by that name, as a matter of fact. But the Pharisees had never compared the various passages concerning the Messiah, His person and His work, and were for that reason ignorant of His mission. The fact of the twofold nature in Christ was plainly taught in the Old Testament, but their eyes had been blinded by their false hopes and aspirations. "Jesus refers only to that fact that David, Ps. 110, 1, calls Him his Lord: If, then, David, He says, calls Him Lord, how is He his Son? It sounds strange and is contrary to nature that a father calls his son a lord, that he also becomes subject to him and serves him. Now, David calls Christ his Lord, and such a Lord to whom God Himself says: Sit Thou at My right hand, etc., that is, Be equal with Me, known and adored as very, true God; for on God's chair or at His right hand no other may properly sit; He is so jealous that He will permit no one else to sit as His equal with Him, as He says in the Prophet Isaiah, chapter 48, 11: Neither will I give My honor, etc. Since, then, He places Christ on a level with Him, the latter must be more than all creatures." 174) To be Lord on high, equal with God, and yet to be the Son of David, according to the flesh, to have the divinity and the humanity combined in one person, that is the Messiah of prophecy. And what the learned Jews could not understand and explain, which made them speechless and utterly discomfited, is the great comfort of the believers of all time. "That is appreciating the person of Christ and knowing whose Son He is, namely, a Son of David; for He is a man, but yet also a Lord of David, as He that is sitting at the right hand of God and has His enemies, sin, death, and hell, as a foostool for His feet. Therefore, he who is in need of salvation against such enemies, let him not seek it with Moses, not through the Law, his own works, and piety; let him seek it with the Son and Lord of David, there he will surely find it. This the blind Pharisees do not know, therefore they do not respect the Lord Christ; they are satisfied with what they know out of the Law, how one should love God and one's neighbor. And yet it is impossible to know God, much less to love God, unless one knows Christ. As He says Matt. 11, 27: No one knows the Father but the Son, and to whom the Son reveals it. . . . But here we see the riches of the superabundant goodness and mercy of God, that God spared not His only-begotten Son, but delivers Him into the death of the cross for us, in order that we, liberated from sins, through Him should live forever. That is an eternal, boundless, fathomless love and mercy, which no man can know unless he knows Christ." 175)

Summary. *Jesus tells the parable of the marriage-feast, answers the question of the Herodians regarding tribute-money, convicts the Sadducees with their denial of the resurrection, gives the Pharisees the proper information as to the greatest commandment, and proposes a question concerning the twofold nature of the Messiah which they are unable to answer.*

---

174) Luther, 11, 1709
175) Luther, 13, 911.

CHAPTER 23.

The Inordinate Ambition of the Pharisees.

Matt. 23, 1—12.

Hypocrisy in high places: V. 1. **Then spake Jesus to the multitude and to His disciples,** v. 2. **saying, The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat.** V. 3. **All, therefore, whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do ye not after their works; for they say, and do not.** V. 4. **For they bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers.** The evangelist has here recorded the most relentless, scathing denunciation from the mouth of Jesus of which we have knowledge. It is an arraignment of spiritual wickedness in high places, a treatise on the use and abuse of the Law, which is without equal in the gospels. Jesus addressed this discourse to the people and to His disciples, although the scribes and Pharisees were present. He had definitely turned from these hopeless enemies, in whose case every new effort to win their love only resulted in greater hatred. He defines their position. The scribes and Pharisees formerly sat in Moses' seat by God's appointment; they now sit in the place of the teachers of the people by divine permission. Although many of their explanations of the Old Testament were insufficient, inadequate, sometimes even false, yet they held their office as teachers for the time being. "For God had instituted the office of the Levitical priesthood and ministry of the Word, in order that the people might learn the Ten Commandments given by Moses. The entire tribe of Levi was ordained for that purpose, to wait upon Holy Scriptures. That is what the Lord calls the seat of Moses, that is, the ministry of the Word, that they should preach Moses. He says: If you hear the preaching, This the Law and Moses have commanded, then do and observe it, for it is not the word and work of the Pharisees, but that of God and Moses." 176) If in this sense they enjoin and bid the people something which is plainly stated in the Word of God, if they use their official position and authority in a proper, legal manner, teaching and expounding the Law and the prophets, then the people should do exactly according to their doctrine, make the observance of their precepts a regular habit. But the people should beware of following their example, of patterning their lives after the hypocritical works of these leaders. For they were far from practising what they preached and exhorted. They bound together, like fagots in a big bundle, grievous burdens, and laid them upon the backs of other people, but they themselves had no desire to touch them with so much as a single finger. They were very severe over against others, but very lenient and indulgent with themselves. The manifold precepts and commands which they added to the Law of Moses, with the expressed or implied order that they were to be placed and regarded as being on a level with the written injunctions of the lawgiver, were an intolerable burden, which they were very careful to omit from their own private life.

Their passion for honor from men: V. 5. **But all their works they do for to be seen of men; they make broad their phylacteries, and enlarge the borders of their garments,** v. 6. **and love the uppermost rooms at feasts and the chief seats in the synagogs,** v. 7. **and greetings in the markets, and to be called of men, Rabbi, Rabbi.** In public, where they were before the eyes of the people, the Pharisees and scribes were models of piety and virtue. Their works, all their public acts, were done with that object in mind, for they were actors that performed beautifully. A few instances of such hypocritical behavior are given. God had commanded the Jews, Deut. 6, 8, that they should bind His words for a sign upon the hand and as frontlets between the eyes. This the Jewish leaders explained in the literal sense. Hence the phylacteries, or remembrancers, strips of vellum or parchment, about an inch wide and from twelve to eighteen inches long, on which were written Deut. 11, 13—21; 6, 4—9; Ex. 13, 11—16; 13, 1—10. These were placed in tiny chests or boxes, one of which was fastened to the forehead, for the intellect and mind, the other to the left arm, for the heart. The Pharisees made these remembrancers of the Law exceptionally large, either in the size of the parchment or of the letters in which the texts were written. In the same way the Pharisees exaggerated in the matter of the borders, tassels, or fringes on their garments, which the Jews wore according to Num. 15, 37—40, to remind them of the commandments of the Lord. They were fastened to the garments with blue ribbons, since blue was the symbolical color of God, of heaven, of His covenant, and of faithfulness. Verses from the Law were usually woven into these strips. In making these borders very wide and conspicuous, the scribes and Pharisees wanted to parade their zeal for the Law of God. In the same way they dearly loved, and always tried to get for themselves, the highest seat, the first sofa, the place of honor at a festive meal; they always chose the seat reserved for the elders in the synagog; their vanity craved the formal address of the public teacher, when the lay people deferentially called them Rabbi. It was an inordinate, a sickening ambition.

Humility required: V. 8. **But be not ye called Rabbi; for one is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren.** V. 9. **And**

176) Luther, 7, 1130.

call no man your father upon the earth; for one is your Father, which is in heaven. V. 10. Neither be ye called masters; for one is your Master, even Christ. V. 11. But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant. V. 12. And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted. With emphasis Christ singles out His disciples for this section of His discourse. They should stand out in shining contrast to such disagreeable craving for honor and cheap glory; they should not seek such sops of vanity. Especially then will titles become a nuisance of the first rank if they are to denote distinction and rank in the Church. So far as the believers are concerned, there are no superiors and inferiors before Christ, no Rabbis, no fathers, no masters. He is the only one that holds that rank, that bears that title; His disciples, whether men or women, are all equal, brethren and sisters on the same level, Gal. 3, 28; Col. 3, 11. Titles in the Church can never be more than appellations of courtesy, indicating a measure of learning and service, but never an honor by divine right. The true measure of greatness before Christ is humility of service toward Him and one's neighbor. He that, in the sincerity of his heart, renders such service flowing from true faith, is accounted great in the sight of the Master. Any one, therefore, that strives for honor before men, that seeks rank in the Church of Christ, will be placed very low, in the most humble position; his inordinate ambition may even take the Christianity from his heart; while the truly humble, that has only service in mind, will be exalted by the Lord in due season, 1 Pet. 5, 6.

The Woes upon the Hypocrisy of the Pharisees. Matt. 23, 13—33.

The first woe: V. 13. **But woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men; for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in.** This passage of denunciations does not represent a mere opinion of Jesus, but it is the judgment of the Holy One of God upon people that were making all religion a mockery and a pretense. The "Woe!" signifies the eternal fire of hell; that will be their punishment, as Luther says. In their hypocrisy, their acting, they have reached a point where they are deceiving themselves as well as others. They pretend, with a great show of zeal, to be opening the doors of heaven to their fellow-men, by teaching them the way of self-righteousness, salvation by works. But in doing so, they actually shut the doors or gates of heaven in their faces. They thought that they were sure of heaven and had but to enter whenever they chose, but they only deceived themselves, and are now deceiving others and keeping them from entering.

The second woe: V. 14. **Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For ye devour widows' houses, and for a pretense make long prayer; therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation.** The Pharisees had little love for manual or mental labor, by which they might earn their living in an honest manner. As their religion was a mere cloak, so their religious observances were used for money-making schemes. Long prayers were their strong suit, such as were actually made, produced for the purpose, of which they informed the people that they possessed unusual merits and power. Women deprived of their natural protectors, widows whose feelings might easily be swayed, gladly paid for the service of long prayers made in their behalf. Such was the flimsy pretext by which the scribes and Pharisees gained property and riches, Is. 5, 8. This form of graft was especially damnable because it included the abuse of God's name, and was thus both blasphemy and robbery.

The third woe: V. 15. **Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves.** In their eagerness to make an impression upon the people, the scribes and Pharisees were zealously active in gaining proselytes for the Jewish Church. They crossed the seas, they traveled into deserts seeking men and women that might be gained for the Jewish religion, and the number of proselytes of the gate and proselytes of righteousness, those that accepted the Jewish doctrines without and with circumcision and baptism, was at times notable. But in adding people to the Church outwardly, they harmed their souls for all eternity by teaching them the religion of hypocrisy. Many of the proselytes of righteousness were far more fanatical than the Jews themselves. Thus the Pharisees again proved themselves adepts at dissimulation, for it appeared before men as though they were zealous for God, and gained many people away from their idolatry, while, as a matter of fact, they introduced them into far greater, though more hidden, idolatry than before — the faith in their own good works.

The fourth woe: V. 16. **Woe unto you, ye blind guides, which say, Whosoever shall swear by the Temple, it is nothing; but whosoever shall swear by the gold of the Temple, he is a debtor! V. 17. Ye fools and blind! For whether is greater, the gold, or the Temple that sanctifieth the gold? V. 18. And, Whosoever shall swear by the altar, it is nothing; but whosoever sweareth by the gift that is upon it, he is guilty. V. 19. Ye fools and blind! For whether is greater, the gift, or the altar that sanctifieth the gift? V. 20. Whoso**

therefore shall swear by the altar sweareth by it and by all things thereon. V. 21. And whoso shall swear by the Temple sweareth by it, and by Him that dwelleth therein. V. 22. And he that shall swear by heaven sweareth by the throne of God, and by Him that sitteth thereon. A typical example of the senseless distinctions that were allowed, because tradition had so spoken. Jesus calls the scribes and Pharisees blind guides, such as undertook to lead other people, while they themselves lacked proper knowledge and understanding, Rom. 2, 17—24. He that swore an oath by the gold of the Holy Place or by the sacrifice upon the altar, things that were sanctified to God, was considered a flagrant transgressor, if he did not consider his oath as fully binding. But to swear by the Holy of Holies itself or by the altar of sacrifice, that was nothing, signified nothing, and was not binding. Small, insignificant details were bolstered up in the interest of human precepts and for the purpose of holding men's souls by fear, but the fundamental matters were ignored. Stupid, blind fools the Lord calls them, that have no understanding of true values. It is the altar that hallows, that gives value to the sacrifice; it is the Holy Place that imparts its sanctity to the ornamentation; it is God, the King of the heavens, that gives to the throne above dignity and worth. For the Jews, therefore, it was time for the readjustment of values. All oaths are sacred and valid, and it will never do to cloud the issue by man-made distinctions.

The fifth woe: V. 23. **Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cumin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the Law, judgment, mercy, and faith; these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone. V. 24. Ye blind guides, which strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel.** Another instance of the religious observance of insignificant things. So strictly did they interpret the law of tithes, Lev. 27, 30. 31, that they were very careful to include even the smallest herbs and vegetables of the garden, the sweet-smelling mint, the dill, the aromatic cumin, used for medicinal purposes, according to an explanation of the Rabbis. In other words, they were most rigidly scrupulous in the observances of even the minutest details of their religion. But, in doing this, the weightier matters of the Law were omitted, judgment, and mercy, and faith. Justice and equity toward all, mercy and love toward those that were in need of compassion, faith in God as the Fountain of all true religion: of these great virtues they knew nothing; they omitted them, they disregarded them. It was well and good in itself to pay tithes, if the interpretation of the teachers included even the garden herbs, but what was punctiliousness in this small matter in comparison with the far more important necessity of cultivating the greatest virtues? Their attitude could well be compared to the proverbial choking in the attempt to swallow a gnat, but performing the same act in the case of a camel with the greatest ease. They carefully strained out any small insect out of the wine, in order not to be defiled, but the swallowing of a camel would have given them little compunction. The tiniest omission of a secondary rule hurt their consciences, but the infringement of the fundamental precepts of God as they should obtain among men made no impression upon them.

The sixth woe: V. 25. **Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess. V. 26. Thou blind Pharisee, cleanse first that which is within the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also.** A picture taken from the well-known strictness of the Pharisees in the matter of washings and purifications prescribed by law. In all such outward forms, also in the precepts concerning eating and drinking, they took care to maintain an unblemished appearance before men. But incidentally the results of robbery and incontinence filled their pockets. In true purity it is essential that the inside of the platter and cup be clean first; the purity of the exterior will follow as a matter of course. There can be no real piety, no true righteousness of life, unless the inward man is first renewed. Conversion must precede sanctification. A person may train himself to observe the outward semblance of proper form and even of Christian virtues, but without a change of heart all this avails nothing. "He says: Externally everything is so clean that it could not be better. But how is it in your heart? He does not speak of the cup or of the platter, but of the heart that it is full of uncleanness. He does not reject their purity altogether. For they should clean first of all what was inside. This purity which ye not only observe, but also teach, when ye think if the garment of purple is brushed, and everything, bed and dress, is clean, that is your righteousness, and do not hinder this purity, but even teach it, and are still inside full of robbery, devouring, uncleanness, and even defend this doctrine and life. It cannot be sin that ye rob and steal everything they have from the poor people!" 177)

The seventh woe: V. 27. **Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For ye are like unto whited sepulchers, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness. V. 28. Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but**

177) Luther, 7, 1194. 1195.

within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity. It was a custom among the Jews, derived by the Rabbis from Ezek. 39, 15, and said to extend back to the time of Joshua, that every year on the fifteenth of Adar, one month before the Passover, the graves of such as were buried on the hillsides or near the highways had to be whitened with a sort of chalk. They thus became conspicuous both by day and night, and the pilgrims to the great festival that were not acquainted with the country could avoid Levitical contamination by going around such graves, for the contact with a grave would defile a Jew. Exactly like such graves, according to Christ's judgment, are the scribes and Pharisees. Their life, as they present it in the view of the multitude, was fair, inviting nothing but commendation, but its actual loathsomeness, when one penetrated beyond the outside shell and examined the heart, was so great as to provoke nothing but condemnation. Hypocrites they are, whose very boast of the Law is resolved into lawlessness and opposition to the Law.

The eighth woe: V. 29. **Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! because ye build the tombs of the prophets, and garnish the sepulchers of the righteous,** v. 30. **and say, If we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets.** V. 31. **Wherefore ye be witnesses unto yourselves that ye are the children of them which killed the prophets.** V. 32. **Fill ye up, then, the measure of your fathers.** V. 33. **Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?** The actual and reputed graves of the prophets of the Old Testament were held in great veneration by the Jews of the time of Christ, a sign which usually characterizes a dead orthodoxy: building tombs and decorating graves while actually rejecting the words of the prophets thus honored by an outward show. And all this is accompanied by much show of sanctimoniousness. They bitterly deplore the fact that the fathers showed so little discrimination and were so hasty in their actions — a trait found to this day in a generation that imagines itself far beyond the people of a few centuries ago in the matter of understanding and knowledge, especially of the Scriptures, and in humaneness. All of which only went to show that they had their fathers' spirit as well as their blood, that as children of murderers of prophets they would have little compunction, and no hesitation, about filling up the measure of their fathers, exceeding them in cruelty and bloodthirstiness, in killing the Savior. In view of such baseness and hypocrisy, the Lord can hardly find epithets to express His contempt of such wickedness. Serpents, offspring of vipers, He calls them, for whom it will be impossible to escape the damnation of hell.

The Peroration and the Lament over Jerusalem. Matt. 23, 34—39.

V. 34. **Wherefore, behold, I send unto you prophets and wise men and scribes; and some of them ye shall kill and crucify, and some of them ye shall scourge in your synagogs, and persecute them from city to city:** v. 35. **that upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias, son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the Temple and the altar.** V. 36. **Verily I say unto you, All these things shall come upon this generation.** It is the beginning of the judgment upon the Jewish nation for their consistent refusal to accept the Messiah, visited first of all upon their leaders. With great seriousness Jesus states this fact, because the present generation is about to fill up the measure of iniquity to the very brim. He would send His messengers again, but their hearts would be hardened by their message, against the message and against the bearers. Their false worship would not want to permit the worship in spirit and in truth. They would kill, and crucify, and scourge, and persecute the messengers of Christ. No form of inquisition and cruelty is too horrifying when people vent their spite against the messengers of the true Gospel. And so the Jews, in being punished for the murder of Christ and the messengers of the New Testament, in having their blood come upon them, would incidentally receive punishment for the murders of the prophets of the Old Testament. They have their fathers' spirit, the same hatred for the truth and its bearers; and so the sins of the fathers will be visited upon the children. Abel was the first one to die, a martyr of his convictions, of his faith. And the hatred of the children of God continued down through the ages, one of the most conspicuous cases being that of Zacharias, the son of Jehoiada, also called Barachias, 2 Chron. 24, 20. 21, not to speak of other murders recorded in history. All the accumulated wrath of God was visited upon the Jews of the generation of Jesus, because they rejected the Messiah Himself. "As though He would say: It is one people, one kind, one generation; as the fathers, so the children. For the stubbornness that resisted God and His prophets in the fathers, resists in the same way in the children: the child is like the mother. . . . All the blood that they have shed is bound to come upon them." 178)

The lament: V. 37. **O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!** V. 38. **Behold, your house is left unto**

178) Luther, 11, 208. 209.

you desolate. V. 39. For I say unto you, Ye shall not see Me henceforth till ye shall say, Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord! A most touching cry of merciful solicitude, wrung from a heart full of the Savior's sincere love. "It is evident that our blessed Lord seriously and earnestly wished the salvation of the Jews; that He did everything that could be done, consistently with His own perfections and the liberty of His creatures, to perfect this; that His tears over the city, Luke 19, 41, sufficiently evince His sincerity; that these persons nevertheless perished; and that the reason was, that they would not be gathered together under His protection";[179] they would not accept His salvation. It is a beautiful picture which the Lord here uses; cp. Ps. 91, 1—7. "Now behold how the hen acts; there is hardly an animal that takes such an interest in its young ones; she changes her natural voice and assumes a sorrowful and lamenting call; she seeks, she scratches in the ground, she coaxes the chicks; whenever she finds anything, she does not eat it, but leaves it for the chicks; with all seriousness she fights and calls against the hawk, and extends her wings so willingly, and permits the chicks to crawl under her and upon her; it is a fine, pleasing picture. Thus also Christ assumed a sorrowful voice, has lamented for us and preached repentance, has shown to every one his sin and woe with all His heart, He opens up the beauties of Scripture, coaxes us in and permits us to eat, and spreads His wings with all His righteousness, merit, and mercy over us, and takes us under Him in such a friendly manner, warms us with His heat, that is, with the Holy Ghost who comes only through Him, and fights for us against the devil in the air."[180] But they would not, the Lord tells the Jews; that accusation stands. And therefore their house would become desert, desolate, their country be given into the hands of the enemies. For He would now remove His Messianic presence from them. Their day of grace is at an end. They will not see Him again until He comes in His glory, when even His enemies will have to confess that He is the Lord over all, when the great Hallel will be sung, world without end.

Summary. *Jesus exposes the inordinate ambition of the Pharisees, rebukes their hypocrisy in a series of eight woes, predicts the coming of the punishment, and laments the stubbornness of the Jewish nation.*

179) Clarke, *Commentary*, 5, 224.

180) Luther, 11, 241; 7, 1261.

THE PHARISEES AND SADDUCEES.

Although there were a number of parties or sects among the Jews, all of which had their adherents among the common people, such as the Herodians, the Essenes, and the political parties of various times, yet none were so influential nor exerted their sway over the people for a longer period of time than the Pharisees and Sadducees.

The most powerful of the Jewish sects was that of the Pharisees, the representatives of extreme Hebraism, the orthodoxists among the Jews. Their members were selected only from the richer and more distinguished ranks of society. They adhered strictly to the literal sense of the Mosaic Law. To the authority of Scriptures they added that of tradition, the rules and regulations of the elders. But they introduced also some of the speculative tenets from the philosophy or religion of the Eastern nations. These ideas had been adopted by the Jews during the exile, and were founded upon the Persian dualism. The doctrine of fate or predestination, of angels and demons, and of a future state of rewards and punishments, were among the newly formulated articles of belief. The Pharisees tried to compromise between the revealed religion and these obscure tenets, adopting those parts which were not expressly condemned in the Old Testament. Since they believed in fate, they maintained that it cooperated in every action of man, and stated that to act what is right or the contrary, is principally in the power of man. They moderated the doctrine of the transmigration of souls in so far as to say that all souls are incorruptible, but the souls of good men only are removed into other bodies, while the souls of bad men are subject to eternal punishment.[181]

Their doctrine is repeatedly referred to in the New Testament, since Christ was often obliged to expose the falseness of their claims, to warn against the leaven of their false doctrine, Matt. 16, 12; Mark 8, 15. They adhered with the greatest severity to the 613 precepts of the Great Synagog, thereby making their own lives and those of their followers an intolerable burden. Incidentally they disregarded entirely the evil condition and the wicked desires of the heart, priding themselves only on their external show of holiness. They lived meanly and fasted oftener than the Law required; they despised delicacies in diet, Luke 18, 12. They forbade even the most necessary works and deeds of mercy on the Sabbath, Matt. 12, 1—8. 9—13; Luke 13, 14—16; Mark 2, 27; John 7, 23. Christ calls their slavish adhering to the traditions of the elders a vain worship, Mark 7, 2—7. 9.

These doctrines were continually revealed in the feigned virtue of the Pharisees' lives; in fact, the two were so closely related that a sharp division is hardly possible. The passage above, Matt. 23, is a complete denunciation of the hypocrisy of the Pharisees. They managed to cast sand into the eyes of the people to such an extent that whatsoever they did about divine worship, prayers, and sacrifices was accepted without question, and many cities gave great attestation to them on account of their entire

181) Josephus, *Wars of the Jews*, Book III, Chap. VIII; *Antiquities*, Book VIII, Chap. I.

virtuous conduct.[182] Since they interpreted all the prophecies referring to the greatness of the Messiah's kingdom as foretelling a temporal empire, they never ceased in their attempts to regain political influence, succeeding, at times, for a brief period. They appeared before the multitude with their fasting, Mark 2, 18. To eat with unwashen hands was in their eyes a transgression equal to the vilest sins, Mark 7, 2—7. They feared defilement by the touch of a great sinner, Luke 7, 36—50, and always strove to carry out the Law in its full strictness, John 8, 2—11.

Since they thus both in their doctrine and in their religious practises held a position which was directly opposed to Christ, it is not surprising that they were filled with venomous hatred toward the Nazarene. They tempted Him, Matt. 16, 1; Mark 8, 11; they tried to entangle Him in His talk, Matt. 22, 15; Mark 12, 13; Luke 20, 20; they took counsel to destroy Him, Mark 3, 6; John 11, 47—53. And after having succeeded in removing the Master, they persecuted the disciples in the same way, Matt. 23, 34; Acts 7, 58; 8, 3; 9, 1. 2; Gal. 1, 13. 14. 23; Acts 23, 6—9. It is the world-old story of righteousness and truth being hated by unrighteousness and hypocrisy.

The bitter enemies of the Pharisees and their opponents in doctrine, but united with them in their hatred of Christ, were the Sadducees, the representatives of the extreme ultra-development of Hellenism, with Greek characteristics. They were recruited only from the richest people, with leanings toward pagan culture. They were the rationalists among the Jews, with modern tenets of philosophy. They denied the immortality of the soul and the resurrection of the body, Matt. 22, 23—33; Mark 12, 18—27. They maintained that there is no angel or spirit, Acts 23, 8. They accepted the books of Moses only and rejected all traditions, saying that the Jews were to esteem those observances to be obligatory which are in the written Word, but are not to observe what is derived from the tradition of the forefathers.[183] Since they did not believe in an after life, they rejected the idea of future rewards or punishments. On account of the small number of their followers and the narrow scope of their influence, they are not alluded to so often in Scriptures as are the Pharisees.

Christ was obliged, for the sake of the truth, to warn against their false doctrines, Matt. 16, 6. 12. He confuted them and their doctrine of marriage, a problem which they had invented to mock Him, Matt. 22, 32. Upon other occasions, also, the Sadducees were exposed and their arguments overthrown with the same decisive frankness, Matt. 16, 4; 3, 7. And therefore their relation toward the Prophet of Nazareth was anything but friendly. To be termed a wicked and adulterous generation, Matt. 16, 3. 4, and be told that they knew not the Scriptures nor the power of God, Matt. 22, 29; Mark 12, 24, roused their anger in such a measure that they gladly joined with the Pharisees in the council, the Synedrion, consulting how they might take Jesus by subtilty and kill Him, Matt. 26, 3. 4. And after the death of Jesus they persecuted His disciples, Acts 4, 12; 5, 18, since the most influential in the nation belonged to their sect, Acts 5, 17. But the Word of God remained victorious.

182) Josephus, *Antiquities*, Book XVIII, Chap. I.

183) Josephus, *Antiquities*, Book XIII, Chap. X; *Wars of the Jews*, Book I, Chap. VIII.

CHAPTER 24.

The Judgment of God upon Jerusalem and upon the World. Matt. 24, 1—41.

Of the destruction of the Temple: V. 1. **And Jesus went out and departed from the Temple; and His disciples came to Him for to show Him the buildings of the Temple.** V. 2. **And Jesus said unto them, See ye not all these things? Verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another that shall not be thrown down.** In this chapter, as Luther writes, there is described the conclusion and the end of both kingdoms, that of the Jews and that of the whole world. Jesus had spent a strenuous day on this Tuesday, teaching and preaching from early morning till the shadows of evening fell. He now left the Temple and the city, in order to return to Bethany for the night. As He was passing out through the Temple-gate, one of His disciples admiringly pointed out to Him the massive, beautiful stones and the rich ornamentation of the Temple, the pride of the Jews, and other disciples eagerly came forward to call attention to special features, to the various porticoes, halls, courts, and other structures. The conversation thus begun continued for some time, probably till they reached the hill opposite the city where they looked down upon the splendor of Herod's most magnificent building. But the summary of Christ's words is given in the solemn prediction — all the more impressive since they were standing or sitting in a place which afforded the most comprehensive view of the Temple — that there would not remain one stone in its proper position upon the other, which would not be completely demolished. The beautiful foundation and walls of white marble, the splendid Corinthian columns, the heavy gold ornamentation and veneering, all would be destroyed completely.

The question of the disciples as to details: V. 3. **And as He sat upon the Mount of Olives, the disciples came unto Him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be, and what shall be the sign of**

Thy coming and of the end of the world? V. 4. And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you. V. 5. For many shall come in My name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many. The blunt prediction of Christ made a deep impression upon the disciples, and therefore they took advantage of the fact that Christ sat down by the wayside, opposite the city, to ask Him concerning the fulfilment of this prophecy, which they associated with the end of the world. Peter, James, John, and Andrew were the ones that were most insistent, Mark 13, 3. They were interested above all in the time of Christ's return, and in the sign which would precede and foretell His coming to Judgment upon the city and upon the world. Note the three questions: When will the destruction of the Temple, city, and the Jewish state take place? What special sign will indicate Christ's coming? When will the end of the world be, the judgment of the living and the dead take place? There is no trace of an idea of a millennium in this question. The belief which the Jews held, and which Christ here supports, is that the present age of the world, the age of sin and death, will end with the Last Judgment, without any intervening time of millennial glory. This is indicated also in the answer of Christ, when He tells them to see to it, to take heed, to guard against deception and terror. For the signs that would precede both the destruction of Jerusalem and the end of the world would be of a nature to demand calm minds and brave hearts. The first sign would be the coming of false teachers, of false Christs. They would come in His name, they would claim identity with Him. By the very boldness of their manner they would make an impression. Many would be deceived, many would listen to their lies and put their trust in them. This was true at the time of the destruction of Jerusalem, as Josephus relates, and it is true to-day. The number of false teachers with their sects is multiplying so rapidly that it is extremely difficult to keep records of them all.

Other external signs: V. 6. **And ye shall hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that ye be not troubled; for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. V. 7. For nation shall rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom; and there shall be famines and pestilences and earthquakes in divers places. V. 8. All these are the beginning of sorrows.** Christ's recital is impressive, dramatic: It will so happen, there is no question about it. The multiplicity of wars, the restlessness preceding, following wars, leading to new wars, wars in which the nations to which the Christians belong are involved, and wars of which they only hear by way of report and rumor: all these things are bound to happen, they are the result of the rejection of the Messiah; and so the Christians should not give way to perturbation, to excessive terror. They need calmness and strength, for that is not yet the end of sorrows. It was not the end before the destruction of Jerusalem, and it will not be the last thing before the end of the world. The wars, on the contrary, will assume a definite form. There will be uprisings, rebellions, of nation against nation, of people against people, of kingdom against kingdom, the Jews against the Syrians, the Tyrians against the Jews, the Jews and Galileans against the Samaritans, the Jews against the Romans and Agrippa, and civil war in Rome itself. As it was in the days before the destruction of Jerusalem, so the instances could be cited and multiplied from contemporaneous history, presaging the dissolution of the world, according to Christ's word. Even so it is with famines and pestilences and earthquakes: A famine in the days of Claudius Caesar, Acts 21, 28, famines involving millions of people in our days; pestilences mentioned by the historians of those days, a most fearful, unexplainable pestilence sweeping over the earth in our times; earthquakes in Crete, in Asia Minor, on the islands of the Aegean, at Rome, in Judea, in those days, similar ones in our days devastating large cities and whole provinces. And these are only the beginning of the intolerable dolors.

Persecutions: V. 9. **Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you; and ye shall be hated of all nations for My name's sake. V. 10. And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another. V. 11. And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many. V. 12. And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold. V. 13. But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved. V. 14. And this Gospel of the Kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.** It is a prophecy of the fate which was in store for the apostles and disciples during the generation preceding the fall of Jerusalem, as well as the persecutions that would fall to the lot of the confessing Christians of all times, especially that time just preceding the final dissolution of the world, the Last Judgment. Then they, the enemies, would deliver them into affliction, that the pressure of every form of hatred would encompass them. And this hatred would not hesitate at times, since this is its favorite mood, to put some of them to death, Luke 21, 16; John 16, 2. All this abundantly fell to the lot, not only of the early disciples and the Christians of the first three centuries, as in the ten persecutions, but also to the Bible Christians of the later centuries, when they became the victims of the inquisition, of religious wars, and of political machinations. The position of the followers of

Christ of all times has been that of the hated ones for the sake of the Lord's name. The mere bearing of the Christian name, in some of the early persecutions, was a crime to which was attached the death penalty. And the same hatred is abroad in the land to-day, intolerance and bigotry, not directed primarily against languages, but against the truth of Christianity. To the hatred of the enemies of Christ would be added betrayal by members of the Church themselves, who would finally take offense at the crosses which were laid upon the disciples. Offense, betrayal, hatred, is the natural course of events in a case of that kind, not only in the apostolic and ante-Nicene Church, where such former members of the congregations were designated by special names, but also in our days, when science, falsely so called, is causing many members to stumble and fall, and finally to become enemies of the Bible and of the Church.

These conditions would be rendered still more difficult to bear because false prophets would arise in the very midst of the congregations, Acts 20, 29. 30; 2 Tim. 2, 17. 18, as they do to-day, counteracting the effect of the pure Gospel-preaching and causing further offense by leading many into error. And in the same measure and degree as godliness and iniquity increase, real love and charity among the Christians would decrease, would be chilled and killed by the winds of affliction. There the combined admonition and promise stands out like a glorious emblem. He that endures patiently, bearing all for the sake of the Lord's name, he whose faith remains unwavering, and whose life bears witness to that faith, he shall be saved, shall finally be delivered from all evil and receive eternal glory as a reward of mercy. "This is what matters here, where we have a life full of crosses, and the devil and the world place many obstructions in the way, that the exponents of Christianity endure to the end, that is, valiantly conquer all obstructions and offenses, if thou desirest to be saved before God. For the kingdom of heaven, Christ says elsewhere, Matt. 11, 12, suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force. Therefore a Christian must not only begin in faith, hope, love, patience, and continue for a while, but also continue to the end. Otherwise, if all the good would materialize that we attempt, heaven would be on earth." 184)

There is also a great deal of comfort in the second promise of the Lord, that the end of the world will come when the Gospel has been preached throughout the inhabited world. Jesus purposely does not fix exact limits, but makes His statement very general, in order to prevent the foolish reckoning of time, which has become such a fad in our days. Very extensively, throughout the heathen world, to and among all nations, to prevent false accusations as to favoritism, this Gospel, the Gospel of His grace and mercy, would be proclaimed. It is both promise and encouragement, promise of a shedding forth of His gracious message in abundant measure, encouragement to carry on the mission-work which thereby fell to their lot, with undaunted courage and willingness.

The abomination of desolation: V. 15. **When ye, therefore, shall see the abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel the Prophet, stand in the Holy Place, (whoso readeth, let him understand,)** v. 16. **then let them which be in Judea flee into the mountains;** v. 17. **let him which is on the housetop not come down to take any thing out of his house;** v. 18. **neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes.** This is true above all of the time of Jerusalem's fall. The disciples are to bear everything in mind that the Lord said, remember what promises He made them, what hopes He held out before them. Then they shall be able to maintain that poise which is so necessary in these latter days, in the troublous times that are then to come. Luther and others have thought the abomination of desolation referred to here was a statue of the Emperor Caius Caligula, which the governor caused to be placed in the Temple for adoration.185) That indeed was an abomination, a defiling of the Temple consecrated to the true God. But it is used here in even a wider sense, Luke 21, 20. 24. The abomination of desolation, the blaspheming horde that carried death and destruction with it, that carried out the terrible, but just sentence of God upon the Jewish people, was the army of Rome, with its military ensigns, its eagles and idols. This, as Daniel describes it, chapter 11, 25. 27; 9, 27; 11, 31; 12, 11, would indicate that the Holy Place had fallen into the hands of the heathen, and that sacrifices to the living God would cease. Such a condition of affairs would be so terrible, so far exceeding all imagination, that they must force their mind to understand what that really means. This sign, the abomination of desolation, indicates the final period beyond which they should not delay; the Christians should not attempt to stay in the city any longer. The most abrupt flight is advised. Those that are still in Judea should flee into the mountain fastnesses, an advice followed literally by the Christian congregation of Jerusalem in fleeing to Pella. Any one that happens to be on the flat housetop when the news comes should not even endeavor to make his way out through the house, but should use the stairway leading down into the street immediately, in order to lose no time. In the same way he that happens to be engaged in the field should make no attempt to get his good clothes. Precipitate flight is the one way to be saved.

184) Luther, 9, 1807.

185) Luther, 13, 2560; 7, 1303.

Further advice: V. 19. **And woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days!** V. 20. **But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the Sabbath day.** V. 21. **For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be.** V. 22. **And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved; but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened.** Naturally, such circumstances would be especially unpleasant and dangerous for such women as were about to become or had just become mothers, since quick flight would be attended by many difficulties. Another evil possibility would be that the time of flight would fall in the season of winter, when the weather would further increase the difficulties and hardships of traveling. And if the flight should fall on a Sabbath, when a false understanding of God's will might endanger their lives, or occur in a Sabbath year, when the land was lying fallow, they might have trouble in obtaining the necessary food on the way. All such factors would tend to bring out still more strongly the extraordinary tribulations, the great distresses of that period in the history of the Jews; God would be pouring out the vials of His wrath in full measure upon their city and nation. If God would not temper justice with mercy and pity, all the people would be consumed in the general destruction. But even in the midst of His anger He has compassion; for the sake of His people, the believers in Him, He will shorten the time of punishment, lest all perish.

The attack upon the faith: V. 23. **Then, if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there, believe it not.** V. 24. **For there shall arise false Christs and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders, insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect.** V. 25. **Behold, I have told you before.** V. 26. **Wherefore, if they shall say unto you, Behold, He is in the desert, go not forth; behold, He is in the secret chambers, believe it not.** V. 27. **For as the lightning cometh out of the east and shineth even unto the west, so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be.** V. 28. **For wheresoever the carcass is, there will the eagles be gathered together.** The Lord still has in mind principally the days preceding the destruction of Jerusalem, though His words may be said to find a general application. The external afflictions would become still more unbearable owing to the fact that the attacks on the faith of the disciples of Christ would be more subtle and be managed with much boldness. False Messiahs would attempt to gain power, at least for a time. The manner and circumstances of their conduct are here briefly sketched, and they find their application to this day. They would present to an astonished world great signs and wonders, such in appearance as well as such in truth, such as are easily explained by reference to religious psychology and plain swindle, and such as baffle the investigators. There is need of careful distinction here to keep the false Christs separate from the true Christ, the false teachers from the true teachers. "Here you may consider whereon the right doctrine, from which we dare not budge, depends. Here remember: The right doctrine does nothing else than to show and set before thee Christ, in order that thou mayest comfort thy heart through Him against sin and death. This is done thus that we are taught Christ is the true, eternal, almighty God, together with the Father and the Holy Ghost, come down to us men on earth, conceived by the Holy Ghost, and born of the Virgin Mary into this world; that He finally died on the cross, not on account of His sins, for He, as God, could not sin, but on account of our sins, in order that God by such death might be satisfied and our debt be paid, and we by Christ's resurrection from the dead might also come to eternal life; that therefore Christ conquered sin and death for our benefit, that sin and death should not harm us; and now henceforth sits at the right hand of God, in order to defend us against the devil, mercifully grant us His Spirit, and hear us in all things which we need for body and soul and ask in His name. That is preaching correctly concerning Christ, and agrees in every detail with the Word; therefore one need not worry about the Antichrist and his lies in that case." [186] In case one's faith is firmly based upon this Gospel of Jesus, he will not be disturbed by the signs and wonders of the false Christs. "This we should remember, in order that we may meet such as praise the miraculous signs so highly and say: I know the devil, he can imitate God (for he is God's ape), he can do all miraculous signs, but they are false miraculous signs. The people imagine, indeed, that they are true signs; even those upon whom they are performed, have no other feeling than that they are blind, dead. . . . But they are false signs, which are done for the purpose that we desert God and pledge ourselves to some saint. But when the people have pledged themselves, then the devil removes the ghost. Then the people say: This or that saint has helped me, and are strengthened in their idolatry. Such false miraculous signs, which the devil has done to substantiate his lies and errors, and that idolatry might become all the greater in the world, the Pope has confirmed and strengthened with his indulgences." [187] Thus the subtlety of the false Christs might succeed, if such a thing were possible, if God

186) Luther, 13, 994. 995.
187) Luther, 13, 2571. 2572.

should permit such an outrage, in deceiving even those that are believers. But no man can pluck them out of His hands, John 10, 28.

Two further characteristics of false teachers are that they always aim to pique curiosity by making their teachings as obscure as possible, either by going out into desert places or by hiding themselves in inner chambers. Such cases are mentioned not only in the Bible, Acts 21, 38, and by the historian Josephus, but they have had their logical successors in the ascetics, the monks and nuns of all times, that shut themselves away from the world in the foolish effort to know Christ more fully. Many such people were regarded with the greatest veneration by the ignorant and vested with the personality and power of Christ Himself. Such fanaticism is branded in the words of Christ: Behold, I have told you in advance; believe it not! And He emphasizes His words by a picture, that of the unexpectedness of the lightning, whose brightness nevertheless illumines the earth. So will Christ come to Judgment, first of all upon the Jews that had rejected Him and His Word. The clouds may have been coming up for some time and the thunder reverberated in the distance, but the sudden flash of lightning, sending its bolt in fearful destruction, is unexpected. So the signs preceding the fall of Jerusalem, as those presaging the Judgment Day, will make the watchful more alert, and yet the actual appearance of the Judge will be like a bolt of lightning, sudden, terrible. Hence the striking, though homely admonition: Wherever the dead body is lying, there the carrion vultures will assemble. Where Christ is, there shall His elect also be. "Thus the Lord has made use of two parables, first of a heavenly one, that of the lightning, which is a fine light, to indicate that His kingdom is unfettered and uncaptured. For since Jerusalem is now destroyed, where the kingdom of Christ was formerly, the question is asked where the kingdom will now be, since Jerusalem is now torn to pieces. There it is said: Where the lightning and where the carcass will be, that is, where the divine Word will be, whether it be here or in another place, there will the Church be." 188)

The signs of the Last Day: V. 29. **Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken.** V. 30. **And then shall appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven; and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.** V. 31. **And He shall send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.** The entire passage is intensely vivid. Note: A striking feature of prophetic utterances in general is the absence of the element of time according to human standards. Events that may be years and centuries apart are connected as though they would take place in one continuous action. The eternal God, who inspires prophecy, is not subject to time. Whatever happens, takes place before Him in one great Now. Another significant fact: Jesus connects the prophecies concerning Jerusalem and concerning the final judgment in such a way that they almost overlap. The judgment upon Jerusalem is not only a type of the last, great Judgment Day, but the judgment of the world has, in a way, begun with the fall of Jerusalem. — There are solemn lessons contained in this chapter. When the day which is destined to be the last day of this world dawns, most unusual and terrible signs will appear. The sun will be darkened, the moon will lose her splendor, the stars will fall from the sky, the powers which control the heavens will be agitated, all the laws of nature will be overthrown. No ordinary eclipses, shooting stars, meteors here, that are merely acting in accordance with nature's laws; here is chaos, here is the subverting of all the powers that have held the universe in its accustomed path. The same Creator that formed the heavens and framed the laws which regulate the great machinery of creation will at that time recall the laws, and deal with the universe according to His further plan and will. And then, amid the uproar of the elements and the quaking of the heavens, the great sign, the Son of Man Himself, will appear in the sky, clothed with His eternal power and majesty. The former despised Nazarene, the Son of Man in His humiliation, will show that His claims of supernatural endowments were only too well founded.189) Then all the tribes, all the nations of the earth, shall wail and lament, as the Judge comes in the clouds of the sky, with power and much glory. And there will be the sound of a mighty trumpet, and the angels will be sent out as His messengers to collect those that are His own in faith. From the four winds and corners of the earth, from every people and tongue and nation, they will come together at the great call.

The lesson of the fig-tree: V. 32. **Now learn a parable of the fig-tree: When his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh:** v. 33. **so likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors.** V. 34. **Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass till all these things be fulfilled.** V. 35. **Heaven and earth shall**

188) Luther, 7, 1348.

189) Cobern, *The New Archeological Discoveries*, 606.

pass away, but My words shall not pass away. Even as the person with ordinary common sense and powers of observation needs no further evidence for the fact that summer is near when he sees the fig-tree's branches become soft with the swelling sap and the young leaves pushing forth from the buds, so the disciple of Christ who sees the signs of which Christ speaks in the whole chapter, including the destruction of Jerusalem, understands and knows that the final judgment is upon him, at his very door. And here is another sign, a further proof for the truth of His saying, for the soundness of His prophecy: This generation will not pass away till all this will come to pass. He means to say, either: The Jewish nation will remain on earth as a race, with all the racial characteristics, till the Day of Judgment; or: The generation of children which I have chosen, My Church, will not pass away, it will stand against all attempts to overthrow it, to all eternity. Amid the crash of worlds, when heaven and earth turn back into chaos and are destroyed, the Word of the Lord abideth forever.

The time of Judgment Day: V. 36. **But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but My Father only.** V. 37. **But as the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be.** V. 38. **For as in the days that were before the Flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark,** v. 39. **and knew not until the Flood came, and took them all away, so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be.** V. 40. **Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left.** V. 41. **Two women shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken, and the other left.** Here is material for careful pondering, above all for those that make it a practise to predict the exact date of Christ's coming to judgment, as many sects have been in the habit of doing since the beginning of the Christian Church, but especially since the year 1000 A. D. Neither men nor angels have a knowledge of the exact season and time, day and hour, when the Day of Judgment will break upon the world, not even Jesus according to His humanity, in the lowliness of His human nature only, Mark 13, 32. It is a secret which is hidden in the councils of God the Father. The Son of God, according to His humanity, has renounced the right to this knowledge for the sake of men, lest they inquire after the day and the hour and give themselves over to a false security. But so much is sure: there will be a repetition of the confident carelessness which characterized the days before the Flood. As the time of Christ's coming to Judgment draws near, there will be a continuous round of feasting and pleasure-seeking, without in any way regarding the gravity of the situation. Note: The Lord's words, "marrying and giving in marriage," are not meant to discountenance the holy estate of matrimony, but they throw a spotlight upon conditions of the present time. For instead of understanding the holiness of the wedded estate, and seeking and entering into it in the fear of the Lord, people in our days have only the gratification of their lusts in mind. The sanctity of the marriage vow has been relegated to the rubbish heap, and while the majority of so-called Christian people do not yet openly profess free love, a great many come dangerously near sanctioning and practising it. For them, as for the people in the time of Noah, the Day of Judgment will truly be a cataclysm, bringing them sudden, terrible punishment. For the guilty cannot escape, even if he be associated outwardly with the innocent, with the believer. Of two men working together, as partners, in the field or elsewhere, one will be accepted, the other will be left and thus rejected. Of two women busy with their housework, attending to the duties that fall to their lot, one will be accepted as a believer, the other will be rejected as an unbeliever. Christ here, in a single vivid flash, shows the routine of Oriental life — the men in the field, the women in the kitchen. "When the grain was cut, threshed, and winnowed, there were no mills to which it could be taken for grinding. This process had to be done in each home, and the labor of doing it fell to the women of the household. Grain was reduced to flour either by rubbing or by pounding. The process of rubbing or grinding was accomplished either by a flat, saddle-shaped stone over which another was rubbed, or by crushing between two stones, the top one of which was revolved somewhat as a modern millstone. It required two women, as Jesus said, to grind at such a mill — one to feed it, while the other manipulated the rubbing stone. The upper stone was apparently rotated by twisting the wrist. It could thus be turned half-way round and then back again." 190)

The Need of Watchfulness.

Matt. 24, 42—51.

A summary: V. 42. **Watch therefore; for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come.** V. 43. **But know this, that if the goodman of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up.** V. 44. **Therefore be ye also ready; for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of Man cometh.** Therefore: Since the exact time is unknown and since faithfulness is required, watch, be on your guard, do not even for a day, an hour,

190) Barton, *Archeology and the Bible*, 135. 136.

a moment, relax your vigilance. Like a thief in the night His day is coming. The housefather, knowing that a thief is coming some time during the night, will far rather watch all night than take chances, with the result that his house is searched through, as if with his permission. Thus the believers of the last days cannot afford to take chances, there is too much at stake. A state of unremitting watchfulness is required of the followers of Christ, in which they are aware every minute of the seriousness of the situation, one fact always standing out in their minds and being brought out in their lives: The Son of Man is coming, a stern and implacable Judge upon the unbelievers that left His warning unheeded, a merciful and kind Judge upon the believers that were always ready for His coming.

The faithful servant: V. 45. **Who, then, is a faithful and wise servant, whom his lord hath made ruler over his household to give them meat in due season?** V. 46. **Blessed is that servant whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing.** V. 47. **Verily I say unto you, That he shall make him ruler over all his goods.** If a master entrusts to one of his slaves, during his absence, the care of the entire household, the supervision of all the servants, such a slave will show that the trust has not been misplaced by being doubly faithful and judicious at such a time. He will not become negligent and careless on account of some delay of his lord in returning, but will redouble his efforts every day, in order to be found worthy by the master. Such faithfulness will be rewarded by happiness and blessing upon the lord's return. The slave will be given still more authority; he will be placed in charge of the entire estate. Even so the disciples of Christ, to whom He has entrusted His means of grace, will be undaunted by the taunts of the world and by the seeming delay of their Lord in returning: they will remain faithful in the discharge of their duties as Christians and not grow lax.

The unfaithful servant: V. 48. **But and if that evil servant shall say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming,** v. 49. **and shall begin to smite his fellow-servants, and to eat and drink with the drunken,** v. 50. **the lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of,** v. 51. **and shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.** The opposite side of the picture: the servant that takes advantage of the supposed delay of his master. Frivolously, exultingly, he says in his heart: There is no danger, the master is tardy about coming. The very remark proves that his work is mere eye-service. And this is borne out by his behavior: playing the tyrant in beating his fellow-slaves, especially such as are anxious to do their duty, indulging to excess in eating and drinking with such as are willing to join him in his debauch. Here the unexpected arrival of the master brings the curse and punishment, an unmerciful thrashing and a condemnation to the lot of the hypocrites, the dungeon with a remorse of weeping and gnashing of teeth. The same doom awaits the false Christians that abuse the trust of their Lord Jesus Christ, delay true repentance, are unmerciful in their dealings with others, join with the children of the world in all the lusts and vices of the flesh, and try to console themselves with the thought: The Day of Judgment is not yet coming. While the Lord rewards the true believers with the fulness of His heavenly blessings and all the riches of the mansions above, the false servants will be doomed to everlasting torment in hell. And not without reason have commentators of all times made special application of this parable to the ministers of the Word, upon whom special responsibilities devolve. The greater the trust placed by God in any man, the more exact will be the reckoning.

Summary. *Jesus foretells the destruction of the Temple and of the city of Jerusalem, with all the signs that are intended as a warning to believers; He makes this a type of the coming to Judgment, which He briefly describes, adding an earnest admonition to be watchful and faithful.*

CHAPTER 25.

The Parable of the Ten Virgins.

Matt. 25, 1—13.

The delay of the bridegroom: V. 1. **Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom.** V. 2. **And five of them were wise, and five were foolish.** V. 3. **They that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them;** v. 4. **but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps.** V. 5. **While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept.** This parable is connected very closely with the preceding admonitions of the Lord, urging watchfulness and faithfulness, faith and love. The nearer the time of His departure, the more earnestly He strove to impress upon His disciples the need of the Christian virtues which are necessary for a living, active Christianity. "Therefore this parable, to summarize, does not indicate anything else than that we

should watch and not be too secure, since we do not know when the day of the Lord is coming. . . . For all of it is spoken against our carelessness, the accusation being that we are far too secure, and always think: There is no danger, the last day is not coming for a long time. Against this Christ and the apostles cry out, bidding us take heed for that day, watch, and be in lasting fear, lest it find us unprepared. Therefore those that watch will receive the Lord with His grace, those that are secure will find Him a merciless Judge." 191) Ten virgins are mentioned in the parable, not with any special significance, but as a round number. The number of virgins of the bride-chamber varied in Oriental weddings, being largely determined by the wealth of the parents. The wedding-feast evidently was to be held at the home of the bride, late in the evening, according to Jewish custom, and the bridegroom was expected any minute with his friends. So the ten virgins fared forth in festal array to meet the bridegroom and to accompany him to his destination. All of them took their lamps, small, saucer-shaped vessels with a cover, in the middle of which was a small hole for pouring in the oil and for providing air; at one side a spout protruded and the wick came out through this. Such a lamp would not contain enough oil to burn all night, so that to carry it to a prolonged wedding-feast without an extra supply of oil was a strong example of improvidence.192) The wise virgins, that were thoughtful and used foresight, took an additional supply of oil with them in vessels provided for that purpose; the foolish and improvident, that refused to heed the necessity, took their lamps only. "When the Kingdom is preached, these are the results: Some receive it with all their heart and are serious about it, believe the Word, make the most strenuous efforts to practise good works, let their lamps shine before the world; for they are well provided with lamps and oil, that is, with faith and love: these are represented by the wise virgins. Then there are some that also accept the Gospel, but are sleepy, are not serious about it, think they can succeed with their works, are secure, and believe it can be paid for with works; those are indicated in the foolish virgins. In Scripture those are called foolish that do not obey the Word of God, but follow their own mind, will not be taught, accept no opinion but their own. But it will happen to them at last as it here happened to the foolish virgins. These two kinds of people are in this Kingdom, namely, where the Gospel and the Word of God is preached and there should be exercise of faith: some follow, some do not follow. . . . Remember, then, in this Gospel that the lamps without oil signify a mere external thing and a bodily exercise without faith in the heart; but the lamps with oil are the internal riches, also the external works with true faith." 193) The bridegroom was delayed, and so the virgins, sitting down in convenient places, began to nod, and finally they all slept, the wise with the foolish. There is danger at all times that a false sense of security lulls the spiritual senses to sleep.

The coming of the bridegroom: **V. 6. And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him. V. 7. Then all those virgins arose and trimmed their lamps. V. 8. And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil; for our lamps are gone out. V. 9. But the wise answered, saying, Not so, lest there be not enough for us and you; but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves. V. 10. And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage; and the door was shut.** After an unusually long delay, after they had almost given up all hopes, some one, having been aroused by the noise of the approaching company of the bridegroom, gave the alarm. All of the virgins quickly jumped up and trimmed the wicks of their lamps, in order that they might be burning with full brightness as they entered into the wedding-feast. But the improvident virgins were not ready for the emergency, their lamps, whose oil had been consumed, were at the point of going out, there was a mere glimmering of a dry wick. But their appeal to the prudent virgins met with a cold reception. If their request were granted, there was danger that they all would lack oil and be refused admission to the marriage festival. This is not selfishness, but sound prudence. In the emergency of Christ's coming to Judgment, the helpfulness of the Christian life is a thing of the past, and the bands of friendship and even of the closest relationship are torn asunder. The time of grace is at an end. The merchants, the dispensers of God's grace, have definitely closed their shops. Every one must stand on his own merits. "That is a clap of thunder against those that rely upon the merits of the saints and other people; since none of them has enough for himself, not to speak of having something left over to impart to others. Therefore, when they now want to come and knock, and would also like to go in to the wedding, they will have to hear, as did the foolish virgins: I know you not; those that were to come in have come in. That will be a terrible sentence." 194) The frantic attempts of the imprudent virgins to provide fuel for their lamps were without avail. And, in the mean time, the festival procession reached the home of the bride. Those that were fully prepared in every respect went with the bride-

191) Luther, 11, 1924.
192) Barton, *Archeology and the Bible*, 148.
193) Luther, 11, 1925. 2407.
194) Luther, 11, 1926.

groom and were seated at the festival board, whereupon the door was locked. Fatal words, shutting off all hope!

Too late: V. 11. **Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us.** V. 12. **But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not.** V. 13. **Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of Man cometh.** When it was too late, the other virgins came. It is not stated whether they had any success in their quest. But they made an attempt to gain admittance to the wedding feast. Without success! With solemn emphasis they are told: I know you not. Their terror, repentance, and despair have come too late; they have neglected their opportunity; they have forfeited their happiness. The Lord adds the solemn warning of chapter 24, 42 once more, urging constant, ceaseless watchfulness, since the day and the hour of His coming is hidden from the knowledge of men. To summarize: The bridegroom is Jesus Christ, John 3, 29. The feast is the blessedness of heaven prepared for all His true followers. The foolish virgins are such as have indeed received faith, but have kept only its outward semblance, hoping to find acceptance on the strength of past merits. The wise virgins are such as are careful about providing and keeping fuel for their faith, in order that their lamps may not be extinguished at a critical time. The oil is the grace and salvation of God offered and given in the Word, by the work of the Holy Ghost. The bridegroom is apparently delaying His coming, 2 Pet. 3, 9. But He will surely make His appearance for the last great judgment at a time when He is least expected. At that time every one will stand and fall with his own faith, and those that are lacking in its power must accept the fate which they have brought upon themselves: exclusion from the bridal feast of the Lamb.

The Parable of the Talents.

Matt. 25, 14—30.

The talents entrusted: V. 14. **For the kingdom of heaven is as a man traveling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods.** V. 15. **And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; to every man according to his several ability; and straightway took his journey.** V. 16. **Then he that had received the five talents went and traded with the same, and made them other five talents.** V. 17. **And likewise he that had received two, he also gained other two.** V. 18. **But he that had received one went and digged in the earth, and hid his lord's money.** The transition from the previous parable to this one is very abrupt, indicating a very close connection in thought. It is the question of faithfulness and its test in the judgment of the last great day. Since the hour of the Lord's return is unknown to us, and since He will require a reckoning from us, therefore the lesson of this parable is so important. The master, in preparing for his journey, called his own servants, his favorite slaves, of whose faithfulness and willingness to serve he was convinced, and gave his wealth into their keeping, entrusting to one of them five talents, each talent of silver being worth about $1,200, to a second two, and to a third only one. He had carefully observed them, and was convinced that the amount given to each to do business with corresponded with his business ability. After the master had left, the first servant lost no time in investing the money he had received profitably. So well did he succeed in his business ventures that he had soon doubled his capital. In the same way the second servant gained two talents by the judicious investment of the two entrusted to him. But the third servant lacked both energy and enterprise. He dug a hole in the ground, and hid the talent of silver there.

The accounting of the good servants: V. 19. **After a long time the lord of those servants cometh, and reckoneth with them.** V. 20. **And so he that had received five talents came and brought other five talents, saying, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me five talents; behold, I have gained beside them five talents more.** V. 21. **His lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy lord.** V. 22. **He also that had received two talents came and said, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me two talents; behold, I have gained two other talents beside them.** V. 23. **His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy lord.** When a long time had elapsed, during which they might easily find or make opportunity to make safe and judicious, but well-paying investments, the lord came. He at once holds a conference with his servants and broaches the question of business in his absence. Proudly the first servant came forward and carried with him not only the original sum of money, but also the money he had gained by his hard work and careful business enterprise. He presents the money and holds it out for verification. The master was highly pleased, not so much at the sum of money gained as at the faithful work of the servant. He assures him that he has done excellently well; he calls him a devoted and faithful servant. And his reward would be that he would have a far greater sphere of activity in the service of his master, since such business ability, coupled with such

energy, enthusiasm, and trustworthiness, was worthy of a larger field. And he was to share in the returns of his labors by becoming, in a way, the partner of the master, and enjoying the fruits of wider usefulness. In exactly the same way the second servant now stepped forward, and in the same modest, unassuming, but effective way made his report concerning the investments he had made with the master's money. And he also was praised in the same way, commended highly for the course he had pursued, and rewarded in the identical terms as the other man, since his devotion and fidelity in his own sphere had been just as great as that of his fellow-servant with greater financial genius.

The accounting of the lazy servant: V. 24. **Then he which had received the one talent came and said, Lord, I knew thee that thou art an hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strewed;** v. 25. **and I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth. Lo, there thou hast that is thine.** V. 26. **His lord answered and said unto him, Thou wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not strewed.** V. 27. **Thou oughtest, therefore, to have put my money to the exchangers, and then at my coming I should have received mine own with usury.** V. 28. **Take therefore the talent from him, and give it unto him which hath ten talents.** V. 29. **For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance; but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath.** V. 30. **And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.** The whining, disagreeable wretch of a servant is excellently portrayed. Slinking forward, he brought his one lonely talent, and then tried to make a defense of his inexcusable conduct. As usual in such cases, he tried to put the blame upon the master. He believed the master to be hard, avaricious, grasping, ungenerous, with no love and reward for his servants, who were forced to slave and toil unremittingly to increase his gains, without receiving any share in the harvest which their hands produced — the old cry of labor against capital. He intimates that he did not want to do a thing more than he was absolutely obliged to for such a master, since it did not pay; do only and exactly as much as is demanded, but not a shred more. And so in the fear of his cowardly heart, he himself did not know what about, he had hidden the talent, which he now produced. But in these words he pronounced his own sentence. If he believed that to be the character of his master, he should have acted in accordance with his judgment. Without in any way hurting himself and straining his own energy and business ability, he could have carried the money to the bank, where the money-changers would have been glad to invest the silver for him and give the master interest into the bargain. The sentence of the master is therefore quickly passed upon him. He calls him a wicked, mean-spirited servant, one of those small souls that never rise above the dirt. The real trouble with him is laziness, together with lack of appreciation of the chances offered him. And so his one talent is to be taken from him and added to the ten talents of the one whose energy and ambition shone forth in comparison with this sluggard. The proverbial saying used once before, chapter 13, 12, again finds its application. The reward of success is further success, while the penalty of failure goes to enrich the successful, true in the spiritual as well as in the temporal field. And the useless servant would have leisure to repent of his sloth in the dungeon, with weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Christ's meaning is plain. The rich man is God Himself. The servants are those that profess faith in Him, who are His followers. To these God delivers spiritual gifts and goods, the means of grace, His Holy Spirit, all the Christian virtues, ability along the various lines of work in His kingdom. To every one, to each individual, God has given spiritual gifts to be used in His service, 1 Cor. 7, 7; 1 Pet. 4, 10. He knows the intellectual as well as the moral strength of every one, and is sure that He expects too much from no one. But He wants to see results, in the individual and in the whole Church. He wants to have each one invest the talents he has received with all energy, to work unceasingly in His service. It pleases Him to give a reward of mercy to those that are faithful in these small things, in their own little sphere. To them He will give a partnership in the joys of the Kingdom above. But woe unto the small, mean-spirited weakling, the slothful servant, that refuses to invest his talent, to make use of his gifts and abilities in that sphere of activity where the Lord has placed him. He thereby shows that he is not worthy of the Lord's bounty and cares nothing for His grace. There are few excuses so poor and so miserable in sound as those by which professing Christians attempt to evade work in the Church. All the more terrible, then, will be the Lord's sentence: From him that hath not even that which he hath shall be taken away.

The Last Judgment. Matt. 25, 31—46.

V. 31. **When the Son of Man shall come in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then shall He sit upon the throne of His glory;** v. 32. **and before Him shall be gathered all nations. And He shall separate them one from another as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats.** V. 33. **And He shall set the sheep on His**

right hand, but the goats on the left. The reckoning as it will finally be made is here described; for the day of doom is inevitable. Another impressive passage, awesome in its very simplicity, in the absence of all seeking for effect. He who was within two days to celebrate His last Passover on earth and then to be crucified, here fitly sets forth the glory of His triumph, as Jerome remarks. In glory, the glory of heaven, the glory of His Father, the glory which was His before the world began, before He entered into the weakness and lowliness of our sinful flesh, He will come, accompanied by all the angels, as His messengers, ministers, and courtiers. Through their services He will cause all the nations of the world, both Jews and Gentiles, to be assembled before Him. He will then set each kind of people in a separate place, in the same way as the shepherd keeps the sheep separated from the goats, the one division being placed on the right side of the throne of glory, the other on the left. Note: There are only two divisions on the last day; no social distinctions, no preference by rank and wealth, no neutral people; in one or the other of the two assemblies every person in the world will find himself, inevitably, without escape, in the one case; with no desire to escape, in the other. That is the first act of the Judgment, the separating, the fixing of an impassable gulf. The sheep are those that followed the great Shepherd, Jesus, willingly, that heard His voice, the believers; the goats are those that refused obedience to His gentle rule, that were disobedient to the Gospel, the unbelievers, the hypocrites among the Christians, the entire godless world.

The sentence upon the righteous: V. 34. **Then shall the King say unto them on His right hand, Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.** V. 35. **For I was an hungred, and ye gave Me meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave Me drink; I was a stranger, and ye took Me in;** v. 36. **naked, and ye clothed Me; I was sick, and ye visited Me; I was in prison, and ye came unto Me.** V. 37. **Then shall the righteous answer Him, saying, Lord, when saw we Thee an hungred, and fed Thee? or thirsty, and gave Thee drink?** V. 38. **When saw we Thee a stranger, and took Thee in? or naked, and clothed thee?** V. 39. **Or when saw we Thee sick or in prison, and came unto Thee?** V. 40. **And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me.** In this picture, the Judge stands out most strongly: the former lowly and despised Nazarene, now the King of glory, King of kings, and Lord of lords. This King calls those at His right hand the blessed of His Father, since they by faith received the benediction of the Father, by which all good gifts were imparted to them, and by which they became the children of God. Having continued in this faith, they are now, spiritually considered, become of age. They are to enter upon the undisputed possession and enjoyment of their inheritance, of the estate which has been prepared and ready for them since the foundation of the world, since the eternal counsel of God for the salvation of mankind was made, Eph. 1, 4. It is a kingdom which they are about to inherit, for they have been made kings and priests unto God, His Father, Rev. 1, 6. And the reason for this wonderful gift? A reward for their faith, as shown in the ordinary, every-day deeds of kindness to the lowly brethren of Christ: feeding the hungry, giving drink to the thirsty, showing hospitality to the stranger, clothing the naked, visiting the sick and imprisoned; outward expressions of love flowing from the love of Christ, as an evidence of faith. Christ expects no heroic acts, He demands no miracles, but He will judge the world in righteousness, making these deeds of kindness and charity the basis of His judgment; for it is impossible to perform even the smallest act of kindness in His spirit without faith in Him in the heart. The humility of the believers may cause them to disclaim any personal knowledge of Him and therefore of any personal service rendered to Him; but Christ quickly instructs them on this point, telling them that such works, done without all ostentation, without any idea of personal gain, are in reality the truest service they can render to Him.

The sentence upon the unrighteous: V. 41. **Then shall He say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from Me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.** V. 42. **For I was an hungred, and ye gave Me no meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave Me no drink;** v. 43. **I was a stranger, and ye took Me not in; naked, and ye clothed Me not; sick and in prison, and ye visited Me not.** V. 44. **Then shall they also answer Him, saying, Lord, when saw we Thee an hungred, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto Thee?** V. 45. **Then shall He answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to Me.** V. 46. **And these shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal.** A fearful arraignment and a just of those on the left hand of the King: Instead of the "Blessed" which they expected a "Cursed," instead of the "Come" a "Depart from Me." Several very important points: He does not say, Cursed of My Father, for they have brought the curse upon themselves. The everlasting fire was not prepared for them, but

really only for the devil and his angels. And this fire was not prepared from the beginning of the world, God had no counsel according to which He willed the damnation of any man. They have no one to blame but themselves, this just sentence strikes them by no one's fault but their own. By the same method of appraisal of values which Christ used in the case of the righteous, they have been weighed and found wanting. They have not spent their life in the activity of good works flowing from the love of Christ. They may have gloried in deeds which are accounted great in the sight of men, and which are wont to receive headline notices in the daily papers. But in the peculiar works of true charity, in the little deeds of service from day to day, in that life of kindness which is the natural outflow of a heart filled with faith and love toward Christ, they have been altogether deficient. Therefore all their works, even those upon which they have prided themselves, were evil, since they were not of faith. And who can picture the terror of the hypocrites among the Christians, that had the form of godliness, but denied the power thereof, when on the Last Day their lack of mercy is reckoned against them! True, if Christ were to appear in person on earth, with a proper press-agent and manager, undoubtedly the world would be willing enough to dine Him and fête Him. But that is not the service He is looking for. What is done to one of the least of these, His brethren, in simple love, flowing like a pure stream, from a heart filled with faith in Him, that is recorded as being done to Him. As for the unrighteous, their doom is sealed: everlasting punishment is their lot, while the righteous, those justified through their faith in the Redeemer, will go into everlasting life. The former, by their own fault, have forfeited the happiness of Christ's love and eternal glory; the latter, through the love and mercy of Jesus, which have become theirs by faith, will inherit the joys of everlasting blessing.

Summary. *In order to emphasize the need of watchfulness and faithfulness, Jesus tells the parables of the ten virgins and of the talents, and gives a detailed description of the Last Judgment.*

CHAPTER 26.

Events Preceding the Last Passover.

Matt. 26, 1—19.

Final prediction of the Passion: V. 1. **And it came to pass when Jesus had finished all these sayings, He said unto His disciples,** v. 2. **Ye know that after two days is the Feast of the Passover, and the Son of Man is betrayed to be crucified.** Jesus had begun His last great discourse to His disciples immediately after leaving the Temple, chapter 24, 2, and had continued it on Mount Olivet and also on the way to His lodging-place in Bethany. It did not end all His sayings; for He still intended to give His disciples a farewell talk of a most intimate kind, full of the deep humility and searching love which characterized His ministry, John 13—17. But the Lord here completed His historical, His public prophetic office. Before dismissing His followers for the evening, He reminded them once more of the culmination of His ministry. In two days, on the Thursday of this week, beginning with sunset on the 14th of Nisan, the first month of the Jewish church calendar, the Feast of Passover, combined with the Feast of Unleavened Bread, would begin, to last for a whole week, or till the evening of the 21st of the month. Jesus was still a member of the Jewish Church, and observed the holidays and festivals of the Jews, the gospels showing Him to have been present at practically every one of the great feasts since entering upon His ministry. But this Passover was to be distinguished as no Passover before or since, by the fulfilment of the type and prophecy in the person of Jesus, the true Lamb of God. As members of the Jewish Church with Him, His disciples were fully aware of the fact that the festival was coming. What He wanted to impress upon them was the fact that He, the Son of Man, literally is delivered up to be crucified, the most terrible death in the catalog of Roman tortures. In His prophetic character, Christ speaks as though the Passion has even now begun. It is immutably fixed in the counsel of God, the betrayal process has even now begun.

The conspiracy: V. 3. **Then assembled together the chief priests and the scribes and the elders of the people unto the palace of the high priest, who was called Caiaphas,** v. 4. **and consulted that they might take Jesus by subtilty and kill Him.** V. 5. **But they said, Not on the feast-day, lest there be an uproar among the people.** Matthew purposely places the two events side by side: Jesus, out in Bethany, solemnly declaring that He is being delivered to be crucified; the chief priests together with the chief council of the Jews, the Sanhedrin, meeting, not in the usual place, which was in a hall called Gazith, or House of the Polished Stones, on the south side of the Temple-space, next to the Court of Israel, but in the open court in the center of the high priest's palace, where there was less danger of eavesdroppers. Caiaphas, the son-in-law of Hannas, or Annas, the former high priest, held the office that year, John 11, 49, according to the arrangement in-

stituted by the Romans, by which the appointment was made by the year, instead of for life, as formerly. As they came together in a stealthy manner, so their discussions harmonized with their intentions, which were to take Jesus by cunning or craft, with the final object, as the evangelist bluntly puts it, not of convicting Him by due process of law, but of killing Him. Only one scruple they voiced, namely, that the actual arrest should not be done at the feast, especially not on the day of the Passover meal, lest an uproar or tumult of the people arise, that might rapidly assume such proportions as to be beyond the control of the authorities. It was all a matter of expediency, of policy, of politics, with them; they were a merciless band of murderers. It was very difficult to say which way the whim of the many thousands of pilgrims might sway them at the crucial moment, whether on the side of their religious leaders or on the side of the Prophet of Nazareth. Therefore crafty care was demanded.

The anointing in Bethany: V. 6. **Now, when Jesus was in Bethany, in the house of Simon the leper,** v. 7. **there came unto Him a woman having an alabaster box of very precious ointment, and poured it on His head as He sat at meat.** V. 8. **But when His disciples saw it, they had indignation, saying, To what purpose is this waste?** V. 9. **For this ointment might have been sold for much and given to the poor.** In order to complete his narrative, Matthew here relates a happening of the previous Saturday, John 12, 1—8. When Christ came up to Bethany from Jericho, He took dinner with one Simon, otherwise unknown, who had formerly been a leper and had probably been healed by Jesus. According to one tradition, he was the father of Lazarus; according to others, the husband of Martha. While the dinner was in progress, and the guests, after the Oriental fashion, were reclining about the table, Mary, the sister of Lazarus and Martha, came into the room. In her hand she held an alabaster box of most costly ointment of spikenard, which she proceeded to pour out over the head of Jesus as He reclined at meat. Anointing with oil was the Old Testament method of denoting consecration to the Lord. It was used in the case of kings, priests, and prophets, Lev. 8, 12; 1 Sam. 10, 1; 16, 13; 1 Kings 19, 16. It was also a distinction bestowed upon the guests of honor, Luke 7, 46. Mary was not at all saving in her ministrations. She broke off the head of the alabaster flask, just as she had purchased it, and recklessly, lavishly, applied the precious aromatic, so that the whole room was filled with its odor. All of the disciples were taken aback and annoyed, muttering, Why this waste? But one of them, Judas, the treasurer of the apostles, who was a thief, was loudest in his objections. The nard, he indignantly remarks, might have been sold for much, possibly for three hundred denarii, and the money given to the poor. But his show of charity only served as a cloak for his covetousness. The money being in his care, it would be an easy matter to obtain some of it for his own uses.

Christ's defense of the woman: V. 10. **When Jesus understood it, He said unto them, Why trouble ye the woman? for she hath wrought a good work upon Me.** V. 11. **For ye have the poor always with you; but Me ye have not always.** V. 12. **For in that she hath poured this ointment on My body, she did it for My burial.** V. 13. **Verily I say unto you, Wheresoever this Gospel shall be preached in the whole world, there shall also this, that this woman hath done, be told for a memorial of her.** Whether these remarks were made in a subdued tone of voice so as to be inaudible to Christ, or whether He was so engrossed with His thoughts that He did not catch their exact wording, is immaterial. But He knew of the secret ungracious mumbling as well as of the angry remark of Judas. Immediately He arose to Mary's defense. They should not cause her any unpleasantness, they should not make her feel bad "by confusing her conscience, disturbing her love, or by disparaging her noble act of sacrifice." It was not only a kind, but a good, a noble deed which she had done. It was not a mere impulsive act, and, whether she had a presentiment of coming evil, having understood the prophecies of Jesus concerning His death better than the disciples, or whether she merely meant to honor the chief guest, she had succeeded beyond her intentions in actually embalming Him with this ointment for His burial. To judge harshly in regard to many a deed, involving also expenditures, made for the honoring of Jesus and for the beautifying of His services, shows a lack of proper understanding of real, unselfish love toward Him. As for the poor, they are always with us, and there is always opportunity, and usually need, of doing them a kindness, but the bodily presence of Christ was shortly to be removed from the disciples, and all evidences and proofs of kindness toward His person would then be a thing of the past. Solemnly He declares that the woman's deed of kindness, since it flowed from a heart full of faith and love, would be spoken of in her remembrance wherever this Gospel would be proclaimed, in the whole world. Note: Jesus knew, with the certainty of the omniscient God, that the Gospel would be preached throughout the world. He knew that the kindness of this woman would become a subject of discussion wherever such proclamation would take place. He thereby gave the most tactful and incidentally the most serious encouragement to all such as are willing to serve Him in a similar manner.

Judas offers to betray Christ: V. 14. **Then one of the Twelve, called Judas Iscariot, went unto the chief priests,** v. 15. **and said**

unto them, What will ye give me, and I will deliver Him unto you? And they covenanted with him for thirty pieces of silver. V. 16. **And from that time he sought opportunity to betray Him.** There is a world of significance in the expression "one of the Twelve." One of those whom Jesus chose out of the larger circle of His disciples; one of those whom He had with Him for three years, in the intimacy of the communion which obtains between teacher and pupils; one of those to whom He had given the promise of special rewards; one of the Twelve that were to become the teachers of the whole world in a peculiar sense. His name, Judas Iscariot, has, since that time, and will, till the end of time, stand for the lowest and meanest treason. He stands as an example to warn and deter all men against yielding to the first impulse toward sin. Love of money, covetousness, avarice, theft, treason, and murder of His Savior: those were the stepping-stones in his downward career. Without receiving a preliminary inducement from the chief priests, he deliberately went to them and made his heinous offer. He would deliver Christ to them for a consideration. And then began a hellish bargaining and haggling over the price of betrayal. But they realized the caliber of the man with whom they were dealing, his vice being by this time probably stamped upon his face. They placed in the balance, they weighed out to him, they set before him to stimulate his greed, as he actually saw the money before him, thirty shekels or pieces of silver, about fifteen dollars, the average price for a slave in those days, Ex. 21, 32; Zech. 11, 12. For this miserable sum Judas sold his Lord, for this he bartered away his immortal soul. His vacillating mind, greedy for the money, came to a decision; he sought a convenient opportunity to betray Him.

Arrangements for the Passover meal: V. 17. **Now the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread the disciples came to Jesus, saying unto Him, Where wilt Thou that we prepare for Thee to eat the Passover?** V. 18. **And He said, Go into the city to such a man and say unto him, The Master saith, My time is at hand; I will keep the Passover at thy house with My disciples.** V. 19. **And the disciples did as Jesus had appointed them; and they made ready the Passover.** The Passover was also known as the Feast of Unleavened Bread, Luke 22, 1, and since all leaven was removed from the homes of the Jews on the afternoon of the 14th of Nisan, in preparation for the Passover sacrifice and meal, this day of preparation was simply regarded as one of the festival days, especially since it merged into the 15th, the Passover beginning with sundown, approximately six o'clock in the evening at that time of the year. Jesus had had the custom of celebrating the feast with His disciples, which explains their question as to the place in which they would have their supper. The preparations for the Passover consisted in procuring a lamb which measured up to the qualifications of God's institution, in having this slain by the priests in the court of the Temple, in providing the unleavened loaves and the other requisites for the feast, in having the lamb roasted, and in preparing the table, the sofas, and the pillows for the dining-room. Two of the disciples, Peter and John, were commissioned to attend to this work, Jesus giving them another bit of evidence as to His omniscient power. They were to go to a certain place, which Christ designated very exactly, to a man whom He also described to them, and give him a message. The Lord's time was near, even at hand, that time to which His entire life converged, the time when He would be taken up into glory through suffering and death. With him, in this certain man's house, He would celebrate the Passover with His disciples. It is likely, as has been suggested, that this man was a disciple of Jesus in secret, just as Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea were. The disciples carried out the wishes of the Master in every detail, acting as the representatives of the householder in making all arrangements for the evening.

The Passover Meal and the Institution of the Lord's Supper. Matt. 26, 20—29.

The traitor in their midst: V. 20. **Now when the even was come, He sat down with the Twelve.** V. 21. **And as they did eat, He said, Verily I say unto you that one of you shall betray Me.** V. 22. **And they were exceeding sorrowful, and began every one of them to say unto Him, Lord, is it I?** V. 23. **And He answered and said, He that dippeth his hand with Me in the dish, the same shall betray Me.** V. 24. **The Son of Man goeth as it is written of Him; but woe unto that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It had been good for that man if he had not been born.** V. 25. **Then Judas, which betrayed Him, answered and said, Master, is it I? He said unto him, Thou hast said.** By sundown all the lambs that had been presented in the Temple-courts had been slain, and throughout the city of Jerusalem the little bands of ten to twenty Jews gathered about the commemorative meal. Originally, the supper had been eaten standing, Ex. 12,11, but the Jews, after entering the Promised Land, had modified this rule, saying that servants stand, masters recline at the table. Jesus had all twelve of His disciples with Him when the meal began. It began with the benediction over the wine and the feast and the drinking of the first cup, the master of the house drinking first, after him the rest. After all had washed their hands, they ate the bitter herbs, dipped in vinegar or salt water, as a re-

minder of the sorrows of Egypt. In the mean time the paschal dishes were brought in, the *charoseth*, or broth, the unleavened loaves, the festal offerings, and, above all, the roasted lamb, after which came the explanation of all these dishes by the head of the household. They now sang the first part of the Hallel, Ps. 113 and 114, and drank the second cup. Hereupon began the feast proper, the householder taking two loaves, breaking one in two, laying this upon the whole loaf, blessing it, wrapping it with bitter herbs, dipping it into the broth, and handing it around the circle, with the words: This is the bread of affliction which our fathers ate in Egypt. The master next blessed the paschal lamb and ate of it; the festal offerings were eaten with the bread, dipped in the broth; and finally also the lamb. The thanksgiving for the meal followed the blessing and the drinking of the third cup. In conclusion, the remainder of the Hallel was sung, Ps. 115—118, and the fourth cup drunk.[195] "The first cup was thus devoted to the announcement of the feast; and Luke tells us that with this cup Christ announced to the disciples that this was the last feast which He would celebrate with them in this world. . . . The second cup was devoted to the interpretation of the festal act; with it the Apostle Paul connects the exhortation: 'As oft as ye eat of this bread and drink of the cup.' The third cup followed the breaking of the loaves, which celebrated the unleavened bread and was the cup of thanksgiving; this the Lord consecrated as the cup of the New Covenant."[196] It was during the first part of the meal that the Lord made His startling announcement regarding the traitor in their midst. He does not turn directly to the guilty one, but is very considerate with him, as though He were still gently urging him to repentance. Naturally, the greatest consternation and sorrow is caused by these words, and the disciples frantically implore Him: Surely it cannot be I! Jesus gives them a definite sign by which they might know the traitor, namely, the one who with Him would dip his morsel of bread into the broth, and would then receive it at His hands. But in the general excitement, and on account of the fact that all the members of the little circle dipped their bread into the sop, or *charoseth*, this was overlooked in part. But Christ speaks solemn words of warning in a last effort to keep Judas from carrying out his nefarious undertaking. The Lord must indeed enter upon His Passion according to the Scriptures and the will of God, but he that would betray Him into the hands of His enemies was a cursed being, for whom it would have been far better had he never been born. Judas, however, had utterly hardened his heart. The searching, warning words of Christ only served to make him impudent. Note: While the other disciples all address Jesus as Lord, Judas calls Him merely Rabbi, either from fear of a bad conscience or from the depth of insolence. Also: When people deliberately refuse to accept the sweet promises of the Gospel, this will finally become unto them a savor of death unto death, 2 Cor. 2, 15. 16.

The institution of the Lord's Supper: V. 26. **And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is My body.** V. 27. **And He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it;** v. 28. **for this is My blood of the New Testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.** V. 29. **But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father's kingdom.** The sacrament of the Old Covenant had just been celebrated by Christ, for He did not come to change the essence of the old faith, which is the same for all times, but to bring the fulfilment of type and prophecy. But as the sacraments of the time before Christ themselves were only typical, it was necessary that they themselves be replaced by those of the New Testament, to point back to, and be based upon, Christ. While they were eating, probably immediately after Jesus had distributed the bread of affliction, He took bread, solemnly returned thanks over it, thus blessing it. The ancient Jewish prayer over the bread was: "Blessed be Thou, our God, King of the universe, who bringest forth bread out of the earth!"[197] Then, after breaking it, He gave it to His disciples and said: "Take, eat; this is My body." The words of command are plain. From His hand they should take and then eat what He gave them. But it was not mere bread which He gave them; for in referring to the pieces which He distributed, He uses the neuter demonstrative, while bread in the Greek is masculine. Here is a clear reference to the sacramental presence of the body of Christ in, with, and under the bread. This is brought out still more strongly in the parallel passages, especially 1 Cor. 11, 24. In the same way, after the supper proper was ended, when the cup of thanksgiving was about to be passed, He took the cup, returned thanks, thus blessing it and its contents, and gave it to them, letting it go around in the circle with the express command that they all should drink of it. For the wine which the cup contained was His blood of the New Covenant, of the new time of grace and peace with God through the efficacy of this blood, for it is shed for the forgiveness of sins unto all, and actually is given to many that receive it by faith. As for the contents of the cup, all attempts to interpret

195) Rodkinson's *Babylonian Talmud*, Tract Pesachim, V, 68—221.

196) Schaff, *Commentary, Matthew*, 469.

197) Goodwin, *Moses et Aaron*, 489. 490.

the expression "fruit of the vine" as though any product of the grapevine might be used, fresh grape-juice, unfermented grape-juice, grape-brandy, and other modern products, they cannot stand without a denial of the text. For if rules of exegesis apply at all, there cannot be the slightest doubt that the expression as it was used by Christ on the evening of the institution referred to the intoxicating wine of the Passover; for the expression "fruit of the vine" was the technical term of the Jews for the wine of the Passover.[198])

"We Christians confess and believe that the Sacrament of the Altar is the true body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, under the bread and wine, for us Christians to eat and to drink, instituted by Christ Himself. All explanations of the sects, Reformed as well as Papist, as though the bread merely represents the body, and the wine the blood of Christ, or that bread and wine are changed into the body and blood of Christ, come to naught in view of the clear text of Scriptures. Reason, indeed, must yield here; it cannot understand how Jesus at that time, while standing in visible form before His disciples, could give them His body, His blood to eat and to drink, nor how the exalted Christ, though in heaven, yet is present everywhere on earth with His body and blood, wherever this meal is celebrated according to His institution. But the word of Christ is clear and true, and we also know from Scriptures that the body of Christ, the vessel of His deity, had a higher, suprasensual form of being, even in the days of His humility, in addition to His limited form of existence, John 3, 13, also that the exalted Christ now is not locked up in heaven, but as God and man fills all things also according to His body, Eph. 1, 23. Thus we take our reason captive under the obedience of Scripture and do not brood over it, but rather thank God for the great blessing of this His Sacrament. From it we gain ever anew the certainty of the forgiveness of our sins. In guaranteeing to us the grace of God, the Sacrament serves for the strengthening of our faith. As the first paschal meal strengthened the Israelites for the journey which lay before them, through the desert to Canaan, so the Lord's Supper is for the children of the New Covenant food upon the way, for the time of their earthly journey. And it incidentally points forward, just like the Passover meal, to the end of the journey, to the meal of eternity, when the Lord will drink it with us in His Father's kingdom." [199])

Events at Gethsemane. Matt. 26, 30—46.

The prophecy of the denial: V. 30. **And when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the Mount of Olives.** V. 31. **Then saith Jesus unto them, All ye shall be offended because of Me this night; for it is written, I will smite the Shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad.** V. 32. **But after I am risen again, I will go before you into Galilee.** V. 33. **Peter answered and said unto Him, Though all men shall be offended because of Thee, yet will I never be offended.** V. 34. **Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, That this night, before the cock crow, thou shalt deny Me thrice.** V. 35. **Peter said unto Him, Though I should die with Thee, yet will I not deny Thee. Likewise also said all the disciples.** The concluding section of the great Hallel was sung after the close of the paschal meal, a solemn thanksgiving to God for all His gifts of goodness and mercy. Then Jesus led the way out of the upper room, through the narrow streets of Jerusalem, and across the dark valley of the Kidron, toward the slopes of Mount Olivet, to the garden of the agony. As they were passing along, now in the brightness of the spring full moon, then again in the obscurity of deep shadows cast by the olive trees along the path, Jesus, among other things, predicted that they all would become scandalized, become offended, be induced to stumble against Him that night. The distress of this night's events would prove too great for their weak faith. They would not be able to reconcile their ideas of His divinity with the evidence of His greatest humiliation, as it would be presented to them that night. This had been prophesied by Zechariah, chapter 13, 7. I shall smite the Shepherd, God had said, and the sheep of the flock will be dispersed widely. As a herd of sheep without a leader soon wanders astray, and is in great danger of becoming a prey to ravenous beasts, so the disciples, without the assurance of Christ's almighty presence, would become victims of doubt, in danger of losing their faith altogether. Therefore Christ immediately reassures them, not only of His resurrection, but also of the fact that He would precede them into Galilee and that they would be able to see Him again. But Peter was not satisfied with Christ's declaration. It reflected upon his faithfulness, and he was suffering, just then, with a fair amount of self-conceit. Therefore he objected to Christ's sweeping statement, demanding an exception in his case; the others might be so forgetful of themselves as to become guilty of such gross misconduct, but as for him, he would never be offended. That was presumption and overweeningness. And therefore Christ declares unto him definitely that he would deny Him three times during that same night, before the time of cock-crowing, about three o'clock in the morning, Mark 13, 35. Since the first crowing of the cock usually takes place somewhat before midnight, the more emphatic declaration of Jesus that Peter would actually deny Him thrice before the cock

198) *Lehre und Wehre*, 1918, 409; *Theol. Quart.*, 17, 163—175; 20, 97—101.

199) Stoeckhardt, *Biblische Geschichte des Neuen Testaments*, 267.

crow twice should have shaken him up out of his dream of self-complacency. But he is still stubborn, contradicting the Master vehemently: Though it should become necessary to die with Him, he most surely would not deny the Lord. And the other disciples seconded this bragging talk, instead of imploring the Lord for grace and power in the hour of temptation. A Christian that places his trust in his own ability to withstand the wiles of the devil, is less secure than a leaking canoe in the midst of a typhoon.

The arrival at Gethsemane: V. 36. **Then cometh Jesus with them unto a place called Gethsemane, and saith unto the disciples, Sit ye here while I go and pray yonder.** V. 37. **And He took with Him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be sorrowful and very heavy.** V. 38. **Then saith He unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death; tarry ye here and watch with Me.** Gethsemane, valley of the oil-press, was a small country-place with a large garden of olive-trees, well known also to Judas, because it was a favorite haven of seclusion of the Lord. With a full knowledge of all that was to happen in this night, He sought out this place of the betrayal, hoping to gain a last hour of prayer. Eight of the disciples He left at the entrance of the garden. They were to wait there for Him until He was through praying at the spot to which He pointed. Only the three disciples that had been witnesses of His transfiguration He took along with Him, to see the agony of His soul. He felt the need of some one whom He could trust, from whom He might expect some assistance in the form of encouragement and prayer in this hour. For now He began to be excessively sorrowful and to be anguished, an expression indicating the most harrowing and terrifying spiritual affliction. In His agony He calls out to them that His soul is exceedingly sorrowful, surrounded and overwhelmed with a sorrow of the most trying kind. The terrors of death were falling upon Him. He begged them for at least some measure of companionship and sustaining power through prayer. And still the anguish of His soul increased, making even the nearness of these disciples unbearable.

The first prayer: V. 39. **And He went a little farther, and fell on His face, and prayed, saying, O My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless not as I will, but as Thou wilt.** V. 40. **And He cometh unto the disciples, and findeth them asleep, and saith unto Peter, What, could ye not watch with Me one hour?** V. 41. **Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation; the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.** Leaving even His favorite disciples, though near the place where He was going, He felt constrained to be all alone with the horrors of death and hell, with the realization of the unquenchable wrath of God upon the sins of the world which He had taken upon Him. As the vicar, the representative of sinful mankind, damnation stared Him in the face. He throws Himself down upon His face in the dust, and from a heart full of the anguish of terrible suffering His prayer is wrung: Father, if it be possible, let this cup, literally, go along past Me, but by no means as I will, but as Thou wilt. The cup of excruciating torture, of death on the cross, was before His eyes, and His weak human nature shrinks back from its terrors. For death is an unnatural condition, it destroys the life which God has created, it tears asunder the bond between body and soul which was tied by God. If therefore there is any possibility of carrying out the work of salvation without being obliged to endure the sum total of all punishments upon sin, without draining the cup of God's wrath to the very dregs, He begs to be given leave to choose that easier way. The counsel of God, to which He Himself had agreed, that redemption for the lost and condemned sinners would have to be gained through suffering and death, had become obscured in His human consciousness. What deep humiliation! And yet, there was not the slightest hint of objecting and murmuring in His prayer. By all means, in every way, the will of the heavenly Father should be carried out. "How, then, does Christ pray? This is a useful and necessary instruction, which we ought to follow gladly and not forget. . . . Our dear Lord Jesus prays that God should take the cup from Him, and expects, as the only-begotten Son, nothing but good from the Father. And yet He adds these words: Not as I will, but as Thou wilt. Do thou the same way. If thou art in tribulation and suffering, be careful not to think that God for that reason is thy enemy; turn to Him, as a child to his father (for since we believe on Christ, He wants to accept us as sons and coheirs of Christ), cry to Him for help, say: O Father, behold what things are happening to me here and there; help me for the sake of Thy dear Son Jesus Christ. . . . Now we should, in all matters pertaining to the body, place our will under God's will; for, as Paul says, we know not how to pray as we ought. Then it is often also highly necessary that God keep us in cross and distress. Now, since God alone knows what is good and useful for us, we should place His will ahead, and our will after, and prove our obedience in patience."[200] Returning to His disciples after His prayer, the Lord found them asleep. They were unable to stand the test of the great strain; human nature demanded rest. The greatness and depth of the revelation unfolding before their eyes was too much for their feeble flesh. Reproachfully Jesus addresses Himself to Peter, in an

---

200) Luther, 13, 355—357.

effort to rouse him: So, then, you could not watch with Me for even one hour, after all the protestations of a short hour before. He urges them all to maintain a state of watchfulness, and for that reason to pray lest they fall into temptation, for the weakness of the flesh would be only too apt to overcome the strength of the spirit, be it never so willing. It is in the hours of bitter and severe trial, when the weakness of the flesh is ready to give up the hard fight, that prayerful watchfulness, together with unwavering trust in God's power, will maintain the strength of the spirit to keep the faith.

The continuation of the agony: V. 42. **He went away again the second time and prayed, saying, O My Father, if this cup may not pass away from Me except I drink it, Thy will be done.** V. 43. **And He came and found them asleep again; for their eyes were heavy.** V. 44. **And He left them, and went away again, and prayed the third time, saying the same words.** The Holy One of God was here almost submerged in the flood of grief and bitterness which threatened to engulf Him. Fearfulness and trembling had come upon Him, and horror had overwhelmed Him, Ps. 55, 5, the horror of death and hell. For the sins, the guilt, the curse, the punishment of the whole world lay upon Him; He was to die the death of a sinner, the most atrocious sinner the world had ever known. Therefore He felt the sting of death a thousand-, a millionfold. His battle in the shadows of Gethsemane was a second temptation of the devil. It was the prince of hell that filled His soul with the dread of death, in order to make Him shrink back from the tortures of the cross, refuse obedience to His Father in heaven. Thus would the plan of God and the redemption of mankind be frustrated. The sufferings of Christ in these hours are beyond the power of human language to express. For the second, for the third time He sank down to the earth. If it cannot be done, if it be out of the question for Him to expect any alleviation of His sufferings, if there is no recourse but that He drink out of the cup now held to His lips, He is ready to bow to the will of His Father. Comfort and encouragement from His disciples was not to be expected. Their eyes were heavy, pressed down with sleep. Cut off from all assistance of men, suffering the full wrath of His heavenly Father, Jesus had to fight the battle for the salvation of mankind to the bitter, but victorious end.

The end of the struggle: V. 45. **Then cometh He to His disciples and saith unto them, Sleep on now and take your rest; behold, the hour is at hand, and the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners.** V. 46. **Rise, let us be going; behold, he is at hand that doth betray Me.** Without respite, without aid had His harassed soul wrestled with death and hell. And His body was wearied to the point of utter exhaustion. Dragging Himself back finally to His sleeping disciples, He tells them, not in irony or with reproach, but with complete resignation: So far as I am concerned, you might sleep on now; this battle is ended, your watchfulness in My behalf is no longer needed. But it is better for their own sakes that they arise now, for the hour of His betrayal is at hand. The traitor, who was to deliver Him into the hands of the Gentiles to be killed by them, was approaching in the distance. Clearly, ringingly He gives His command: Arise, let us go! There is no hesitation, no shrinking now. He is not like a fugitive whom the officers of the law must seek and finally drag forth from a place of hiding; He is like a conqueror meeting the vanquished.

The Betrayal and Arrest. Matt. 26, 47—56.

The coming of the traitor: V. 47. **And while He yet spake, lo, Judas, one of the Twelve, came, and with him a great multitude with swords and staves, from the chief priests and elders of the people.** V. 48. **Now he that betrayed Him gave them a sign, saying, Whomsoever I shall kiss, that same is He; hold Him fast.** V. 49. **And forthwith he came to Jesus and said, Hail, Master; and kissed Him.** V. 50. **And Jesus said unto him, Friend, wherefore art thou come? Then came they, and laid hands on Jesus, and took Him.** While Jesus was still urging His disciples to shake off the drowsiness to which they had given way, Judas came. One of the Twelve he is called, to heighten the effect of the contrast: A chosen apostle of the Lord, and yet His traitor. With him came a big crowd, as many as could be assembled late in the evening, rabble, for the most part, with a nucleus of Temple police, who were at the command of the Sanhedrin, servants of the chief priests and the leaders of the Jews. In the motley crowd some of the elders themselves may have appeared, though they kept in the background. They even bore arms of a kind, swords and staves, to quell any disturbance of Christ's followers at the start. The traitor may have been considering the best way of approaching the Lord. It was, after all, not an easy matter, hardened though he was, to deliver his old Master to this composite crowd. Finally he hit upon the plan of making a kiss, the token of affection and fidelity, the sign by which they should recognize the Lord, and so informed his band. Upon Him whom he would kiss they should lay restraining hands, to hold Him with main strength, if need be. With a respectful salute: Rabbi, Judas stepped up to Jesus, and kissed Him most tenderly. And the Lord, kind, tactful, searching ever, addresses him with the salutation of disciple or companion, instead of spurning his traitorous kisses, the very essence of hypocrisy. At the same time Christ shows that He knows the purpose of his coming. For the last time He

warns him: Remember what this treason means. "From this horrible case we should learn to fear God. For Judas was not a lowly man, but an apostle, and without doubt had many fine, excellent gifts; just as he, above other disciples, had a special office, and the Lord had ordained him to be steward, or treasurer. But since this man, who is an apostle, who in the name of Jesus preaches repentance and forgiveness of sins, baptizes, casts out devils, and performs other miracles, falls so grievously, becomes an enemy of Christ, sells Him for a little bit of money, betrays Him, and sacrifices Him as a lamb brought to the slaughter; since, I say, such a terrible mishap comes upon such a great man; we surely have reason not to be secure, but to fear God, guard against sins, and pray diligently that God would not lead us into temptation; but if we do fall into temptation, that He would graciously lead us out that we may not remain therein. For it happens very easily that one gets into trouble and commits sins, when one does not watch carefully and diligently make use of the protection of prayer." 201)

Resistance offered by Peter: V. 51. **And, behold, one of them which were with Jesus stretched out his hand, and drew his sword, and struck a servant of the high priest's, and smote off his ear.** V. 52. **Then said Jesus unto him, Put up again thy sword into his place; for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword.** V. 53. **Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to My Father, and He shall presently give Me more than twelve legions of angels?** V. 54. **But how then shall the Scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?** Due to a misunderstanding of Christ's words concerning the necessity of being effectively prepared against all enemies, Luke 22, 36—38, the disciples had provided two swords. In the excitement of the moment, a carnal anger which can very well be explained, took hold of one of the disciples, Simon Peter. Drawing the sword which he had taken with him, he put the full force of his indignation into his blow, succeeding so well that he cut off the ear of the high priest's servant. That was carnal zeal, without a proper weighing of the circumstances, without considering the possible evil results for the Lord. Such fleshly haste is altogether out of place in the service of the Master. The reproof of Jesus is thus well deserved. Put away the sword into its proper place. The reason for the order: Draw the sword, perish with the sword. Unless one has the duty of using the sword, as a member of the government or by the command of the government in a matter which is not sinful, he has no business to make use of arms. The followers of Christ shall not carry on their work with force of arms, but by the Word, in the power of the Holy Ghost. Note also: By implication, there is the inference that the government shall make use of her rights and duties in carrying the sword for the punishment of evildoers. "Where worldly government lets the sword play against sin and offense, that means to serve God. For God has commanded it, since He does not want to let sin and offense go unpunished. That is a special division which God makes among men that He gives the sword into the hands of a few, to hinder the evil and to protect the subjects." 202)

Jesus adduces another reason for objecting to the use of the sword at this time. If He had chosen not to take the way of suffering which was now opening before Him, He might have adopted a far easier and more effective way of disposing of His enemies. He might have asked His heavenly Father for the assistance of more than twelve legions of angels, or more than twelve thousand strong spirits of light, for whom it would have been an easy matter to vanquish the band here assembled. But what Christ is principally concerned about is the fulfilment of the Scriptures, of which He had said that they could not be broken, upon which thousands of the believers of the Old Testament had placed their trust, the hope of the Messiah that would earn a full and complete redemption for the whole world. "That is what Christ says: It must be thus that the Scriptures might be fulfilled. As though He would say: I might easily have begun this matter differently. However, do not ask any further, but believe the Scriptures. If thou wilt not believe or follow the Scriptures, then leave it. Thus we say also to our wise people: We invent no new doctrine, preach no different faith than that of which Scriptures speak. And if we have taught and preached according to Scripture, we have done our share, and let the others remain wise; but we remain with the small crew which believes and follows Scriptures." 203)

Reproving the enemies: V. 55. **In that same hour said Jesus to the multitudes, Are ye come out as against a thief with swords and staves for to take Me? I sat daily with you teaching in the Temple, and ye laid no hold on Me.** V. 56. **But all this was done that the scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled. Then all the disciples forsook Him and fled.** Christ's point is well taken, especially since He addressed these words chiefly to the rulers and to the guards of the Temple. Their manner of apprehending Him was an insult to Him and was unworthy of them, if they still had respect for themselves. As for a common murder or some other criminal they had gone forth, with swords and with clubs, in order to surround and to catch Him. Their mode of procedure savors of shadiness

201) Luther, 13, 363. 364.

202) Luther, 13, 374.
203) Luther, 13, 1762.

and a bad conscience. Day after day He had openly, fearlessly sat in the Temple, since He had nothing to hide, nothing to be ashamed of. He could explain and defend every word of His teaching, and would cheerfully have done so, had they approached Him at any time. But there they had made no show of strength against Him. But all this had to be done in just this manner that the Scriptures of the Old Testament, which spoke of His Passion and death in detail, might be fulfilled in the same detail. It is the eternal Word of the faithful God which is laid down in the canon of the Old Testament, every word of which is true and cannot fall to the ground. The fact that Jesus submitted so willingly to the shameful arrest filled the disciples with apprehension and terror. With their Master in bonds, they were helpless and without hope. They fled in precipitate haste, leaving Him to His fate. Even so, weak Christians that do not always perceive the almighty presence of God are apt to forget the firm promises of the Bible and become traitors and deniers of the truth in effect, if not in deed.

The Trial before Caiaphas and the Denial of Peter. Matt. 26, 57—75.

To the house of Caiaphas: V. 57. **And they that had laid hold on Jesus led Him away to Caiaphas, the high priest, where the scribes and the elders were assembled.** V. 58. **But Peter followed Him afar off unto the high priest's palace, and went in, and sat with the servants to see the end.** The palace of Caiaphas, according to most investigators, lay at the extreme southwest corner of the city of Jerusalem. It was evidently built in the form of a quadrangle about an open court. On the one side of the palace lived Annas, the father-in-law, on the other Caiaphas, the families occupying the upper stories, while the servants had the apartments on the ground floor. The entrance to the palace was through an arched door and passageway, which was usually guarded by one of the servants. After a short, preliminary hearing before Annas, John 18, 13, arranged in the interval until all the members of the council might be assembled, Jesus was led before the highest court of the Jewish Church, consisting of scribes and elders, according to their office, of Pharisees and Sadducees, according to their sectarian tendencies, but all agreed upon that one point, that this man must be removed. Peter, in the mean time, led partly by affection, partly by inquisitiveness, followed the band from a distance, and, having obtained leave to enter the courtyard of the palace, sat with the servants about a fire of coals which the cool spring night made necessary, to see the end, to find out what would happen to the Master. Many a Christian has thought himself strong enough to withstand temptation, to ignore attack and ridicule, when venturing into the midst of the children of the world, but has found out to his great sorrow that such experiments are fraught with too great danger.

The trial before Caiaphas: V. 59. **Now the chief priests and elders and all the council sought false witness against Jesus to put Him to death;** v. 60. **but found none; yea, though many false witnesses came, yet found they none. At the last came two false witnesses** v. 61 **and said, This fellow said, I am able to destroy the Temple of God, and to build it in three days.** V. 62. **And the high priest arose and said unto Him, Answerest Thou nothing? What is it which these witness against Thee?** V. 63. **But Jesus held His peace. And the high priest answered and said unto Him, I adjure Thee by the living God that Thou tell us whether Thou be the Christ, the Son of God.** V. 64. **Jesus saith unto him, Thou hast said; nevertheless I say unto you, Hereafter shall ye see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of Power, and coming in the clouds of heaven.** Note: The enumeration of the several sections of the Sanhedrin brings out all the more strongly the injustice of the proceedings. Men whose business it was to know the Law and to lead in all virtues were here the very ones to subvert right and to make a farce of justice. Also: They deliberately sought false witness. Knowing that the usual method of obtaining testimony against a criminal would have yielded no results, they exerted themselves most diligently to find such testimony as would enable them to judge Him worthy of death, but without success. The more men they examined with their obvious purpose in view, the more thoroughly just and holy Jesus stood before them. Even the last two witnesses that garbled the prophecy of Christ concerning the temple of His body, John 2, 19, could not make their witness agree. The whole trial threatened to be a glorious justification of Jesus. But here the high priest Caiaphas, for fear of losing his case, forgot the dignity of his position as judge and turned accuser, if not plaintiff. He demanded that Christ defend Himself against the testimony which had been adduced. But Christ remained perfectly quiet, knowing that under the circumstances this silence was the best course. Since they wanted not justice, but His death at all costs, they would have pounced upon every word He might have uttered, and mutilated it beyond recognition. "Here see how unjustly the high priests deal with Christ the Lord. For they are at the same time accusers and judges. Therefore the Lord must be wrong in His case, no matter what He may say or do. In temporal affairs this would be a great dishonesty. . . . But for these holy people nothing is sin, they have power in all things; they can do what they please, and challenge all who would accuse them of wrong or interpret some-

thing in an evil way." 204) And now comes the climax of the sinful farce staged by the Sanhedrin. Most solemnly the high priest challenges Christ to state under oath whether He be in truth the Son of God. He was determined to draw an explanation from Christ which could be used as damaging evidence against Him at any cost. To continue silent now would be tantamount to a denial of a truth which was essential in His Messianic ministry. And so He answered with an emphatic: I am. But just as emphatically, and more so, He added a startling bit of information, namely, that the time would come when He would return in glory; in fact, this glorification was about to begin, with His entering, through suffering and death, into the glory of His Father. When these unjust judges will see Him again, it will be in the rôle of their Judge. And all the enemies of Christ will tremble and quake when this same Christ whom they have rejected will come to Judgment and demand a reckoning.

The sentence: V. 65. **Then the high priest rent his clothes, saying, He hath spoken blasphemy; what further need have we of witnesses? Behold, now ye have heard His blasphemy. V. 66. What think ye? They answered and said, He is guilty of death. V. 67. Then did they spit in His face, and buffeted Him; and others smote Him with the palms of their hands, v. 68. saying, Prophesy unto us, Thou Christ, Who is he that smote Thee?** It was the sign of the greatest grief, of the deepest mourning, for a Jew to tear open his outer garment. Here was an act of theatrical affectation without true emotion. He is shocked beyond measure, so he declares by his action, by the blasphemy out of the mouth of Jesus. There is no more need of trial, no more need of witnesses, he declares. His reference is to Lev. 24, 15, to the penalty for blasphemy, and to Deut. 18, 20, to that for being a false prophet. In his eagerness Caiaphas entirely overlooked the fact that he had not proved a case of blasphemy against Jesus. But his acting had its effect. No formal vote was taken, the cries of assent coming from all sides being counted as sufficient evidence of universal agreement. And now followed a scene during which not only the servants and the Temple police, but also the members of the great council forgot the last shred of their assumed dignity and humanity, giving way to the vilest and lowest ways of venting their spite against Jesus. Spitting into His face, striking Him with their clenched fists, slapping Him with the open palms of their hands were only some of the ways in which they amused themselves. It was like an orgy of devils. They tried to ridicule His ability to foretell the future; in short, devilish hatred had unhindered sway. For in reality they were baffled, in spite of their apparent victory. Thus did they fill out the morning hours of that miserable night. And, like them, the enemies of the truth of Christ, unable to find a real accusation against the Christians, will find excuses to vent their spite against them and attempt to hinder their work.

The denial of Peter: V. 69. **Now Peter sat without in the palace; and a damsel came unto him, saying, Thou also wast with Jesus of Galilee. V. 70. But he denied before them all, saying, I know not what thou sayest. V. 71. And when he was gone out into the porch, another maid saw him, and said unto them that were there, This fellow was also with Jesus of Nazareth. V. 72. And again he denied with an oath, I do not know the Man. V. 73. And after a while came unto him they that stood by, and said to Peter, Surely thou also art one of them; for thy speech bewrayeth thee. V. 74. Then began he to curse and to swear, saying, I know not the Man. And immediately the cock crew. V. 75. And Peter remembered the word of Jesus, which said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny Me thrice. And he went out and wept bitterly.** Peter had found a place in the entrance-hall of the palace, not far from the door of the room where the council was in session, and also near the circle of servants that were warming themselves by the fire in the court. Here one of the maid-servants that had seen him come in made the remark that he was one of the followers of the prisoner. Naturally the servants took the part of their masters against the Galilean, and had undoubtedly been discussing ways and means of removing all His followers. Peter, feeling the bristling in the circle against him, quickly made a denial, more in haste than in deliberate malice. Nevertheless his conscience must have bothered him some, for he now left the circle about the fire and walked back to the arched passageway that led into the court. And again he was accused of being a follower of that Jesus of Nazareth. This time the fear that was beginning to rise in his heart made him unduly emphatic; he confirmed his lie with an oath. But they watched him with suspicion, probably talking the matter over among themselves. And finally, after some time, those that were standing about in the court came up to him, speaking more emphatically. Surely he must be a member of the Nazarene's band, for there was his Galilean dialect which betrayed him. Here Peter completely lost control of himself. With the most astonishing vehemence he added swearing to cursing in his denial of any and all connection with Jesus. The chances are that his very emphasis confirmed the servants in their supposition, which, however, they did not act upon. But the Lord had not forgotten His weak disciple. It was now the time of cock-crowing, and the lusty crowing of one of them at just this moment recalled to the mind

204) Luther, 13, 385.

of Peter the prophecy of Jesus concerning his threefold denial of Him. And going out, he wept in bitter repentance over his terrible sin. "Here we should learn, by the example of Peter, our own weakness, that we should not depend too firmly upon other people nor upon ourselves. For our hearts are so utterly weak and uncertain that they change every hour, as the Lord says, John 2, 24. 25. Who would have expected such instability and weakness in Peter? . . . Who would believe that such a courageous man, who holds so firmly to his Lord, would deny Him so shamefully? Watch this example most carefully, in order to know thyself and other people well and to guard against arrogance. For if this could happen to Peter, what do you suppose will happen to us, that are not only much lower, but also much weaker? Therefore it will not do to be secure, but maintain thy fear of God and a very careful lookout on all sides." 205)

Summary. *The Jews complete their conspiracy, and Judas makes ready to betray his Lord, but Jesus accepts the anointing of Mary at Bethany, celebrates the Passover for the last time, institutes the Eucharist, suffers the agony of death in Gethsemane, is betrayed, taken captive, brought before Caiaphas for trial, sentenced, and reviled, while Peter denies his Lord three times.*

205) Luther, 13, 392. 393.

CHAPTER 27.

The End of Judas. Matt. 27, 1—10.

Christ delivered to Pilate: V. 1. **When the morning was come, all the chief priests and elders of the people took counsel against Jesus to put Him to death;** v. 2. **and when they had bound Him, they led Him away, and delivered Him to Pontius Pilate, the governor.** The trial of Jesus before the Sanhedrin, the highest court of the Jewish Church, had lasted into the hours of early morning on Friday, to the time of cockcrowing. Even after that, the Lord had been given no rest, the wicked tortures which some of the servants and others inflicted upon Him robbing Him of even the few moments of respite which his racked and weary body needed. And as soon as the day dawned, the members of the Council convened once more to confirm the sentence of a few hours before, and to make plans for carrying out the resolution thus passed. The law required at least two sittings in grave criminal cases, and thus they observed the letter, even if they did not comply with the spirit of the Law. All the members being present, a formal vote was taken, really only a formality, since any opposing voices would quickly have been silenced. Again the object is nakedly stated: to put Him to death. It seems from the language used by Luke, chapter 22, 66, that they led Jesus, in formal procession, from the palace of the high priest to the House of Polished Stones, the meeting-hall at the Temple, for according to the Talmud sentence of death could be pronounced only in this room. In the bitterness of their hatred and their burning desire for revenge, the Jews even overlooked the fact that on a festival day the rules of the Sabbath held good, according to which a meeting of the Sanhedrin was unlawful. Having agreed upon their course of action, they now led forth the Lord, bound like a criminal, and delivered Him to Pilate, the governor or procurator of the province. For since Judea had become a Roman province, after the deposition of Archelaus, the Jews no longer had the right to carry out a sentence of capital punishment. They were obliged to turn over criminals whom they believed guilty of death to the procurator, who resided at Caesarea, but came up to Jerusalem during the week of the Passover, partly to keep order among the many thousands of pilgrims, partly to overawe and thus keep in check any revolutionary spirits by the power of Roman prestige.

The remorse and death of Judas: V. 3. **Then Judas, which had betrayed Him, when he saw that He was condemned, repented himself, and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders,** v. 4. **saying, I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood. And they said, What is that to us? See thou to that.** V. 5. **And he cast down the pieces of silver in the Temple, and departed, and went and hanged himself.** Here we see both facts, as Luther says, namely, that the sin enters in a very smooth way, but afterwards causes a terrible end. Judas had probably been under the impression that Jesus would do as He often had done, make use of His divine power, throw off His bonds, and walk away a free man. But the procession to the governor's palace showed him definitely that there would be no miraculous deliverance in this case. Christ's condemnation by the Jews had been voted upon, and it was to be expected that the governor would agree to the demand of the Jews. As this certainty was brought home to him, his eyes were suddenly opened to the heinousness of his offense against Jesus. Deep remorse and sorrow over this took hold of him, a repentance nursed by Satan, as seeing only the depth, the abyss of the transgression. His first thought was not to make an open confession of his sin to the Lord, humbly imploring the forgiveness which was even now being

earned for this sin also, but to get rid of the fruits and proof of his sin. So he returned the thirty pieces of silver, the reward of iniquity, attempting to hand the money back to the high priests and elders that had accepted the offer of betrayal from him. He realized now that his betrayal of innocent blood, of the blood of an innocent, holy man, was a grievous sin. But he met with a cool reception, being told that this was no concern of theirs; he must attend to his own affairs. That is the manner of the tempters and deceivers: Before the sin is committed, they exhibit a kind face, but when the victim of their wiles is tortured by harrowing remorse, they disclaim all responsibility. Let each one take care of himself, is their cry at such a time. In this case the devil took care of his own. For Judas took the money which the high priests and elders rejected, threw it in the Temple, probably with the idea of making partial expiation for his sin, and then committed suicide by hanging. That was the end of a repentance which did not turn to the Savior, but despaired of ever finding mercy. The sorrow of the world worketh death, 2 Cor. 7, 10. "That is the other peculiarity of sin, which we should note carefully. In the beginning it sleeps, and seems to be an easy, harmless thing. But it does not sleep long, and when it awakens, it becomes an unbearable burden, which it is impossible to carry, unless God helps in a special way. This we see in the case of poor Judas.... For when he sees the Lord being led to Pilate, and now must fear that His life is forfeited, he repents and sees for the first time what he really has done. There sin awakens and shows itself in its way so fierce and terrible that he cannot endure it. Before this he had loved the money, the thirty pieces of silver, so dearly that it seemed a small matter to him to betray and to sell Christ the Lord; but now he is changed: If he had the money and goods of the whole world, he would give it all in return for the assurance that the life of Christ the Lord might be saved." 206)

The purchase of the field of blood: V. 6. **And the chief priests took the silver pieces and said, It is not lawful for to put them into the treasury, because it is the price of blood.** V. 7. **And they took counsel, and bought with them the potter's field, to bury strangers in.** V. 8. **Wherefore that field was called The Field of Blood, unto this day.** V. 9. **Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet, saying, And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of Him that was valued, whom they of the children of Israel did value;** v. 10. **and gave them for the potter's field, as the Lord appointed me.** The evangelist here draws a picture of hypocrisy in its most repulsive form. The remorse of Judas over the betraying of innocent blood makes absolutely no impression upon them, but the possible infraction of a rule drawn from Deut. 23, 18 fills their hearts with consternation. In sanctimonious horror they hold up their hands to ward off a threatening calamity: It will never do to lay this blood-money (which they themselves had paid for that purpose) into the holy treasury. And so the pious frauds hold a solemn meeting and decide to invest the money in a cemetery for strangers, an old claypit being available for that purpose. Matthew refers to a prophecy which was here fulfilled in a most remarkable way, naming the more important prophet as his source, Jer. 18, 2. 3; 32, 6—15; Zech. 11, 13. They took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of Him who was valued at that sum, or the price of the inestimably Valuable One, whom they bought from the children of Israel, paying the money for the field of the potter, according to the command of the Lord. The two prophecies are here blended in a wonderful way, affording a further proof for the inspiration of both the gospel and the books of the prophets, since the Lord states His eternal truth according to His will. For many years after the events here recorded, the cemetery thus purchased was simply known as the Field of Blood, a fine monument to the chief priests and the betrayal of the Holy One of God.

The Trial before Pilate. Matt. 27, 11—30.

The beginning of the trial: V. 11. **And Jesus stood before the governor; and the governor asked Him, saying, Art Thou the King of the Jews? And Jesus said unto him, Thou sayest.** V. 12. **And when He was accused of the chief priests and elders, He answered nothing.** V. 13. **Then said Pilate unto Him, Hearest Thou not how many things they witness against Thee?** V. 14. **And He answered him to never a word, insomuch that the governor marveled greatly.** Matthew's story of the events of this Friday morning brings out very strongly the dignity, the divinity, the deity of the Lord, accused before the governor as being a criminal. Upon the question of the procurator as to His being the King of the Jews, He gives him an emphatic answer in the affirmative, explaining incidentally to the unappreciative Pilate the nature of His kingdom, John 18, 33—37. But with reference to all the other charges which the chief priests invented against Him, the Lord maintained a baffling silence. "The accusations were by His silence stamped as groundless, and this majesty of silence filled Pilate with wonder and amazement." 207) All the efforts of the governor to make Him answer the taunts of the Jews availed him nothing. Why waste breath when the Jews and Pilate knew very well that the charges were altogether

206) Luther, 13, 405.

207) Schaff, *Commentary, Matthew*, 510.

unfounded! The wonder, but also the superstition of Pilate grew apace in the course of the trial.

The offer to release Jesus: V. 15. **Now, at the feast the governor was wont to release unto the people a prisoner whom they would.** V. 16. **And they had then a notable prisoner, called Barabbas.** V. 17. **Therefore, when they were gathered together, Pilate said unto them, Whom will ye that I release unto you? Barabbas, or Jesus which is called Christ?** V. 18. **For he knew that for envy they had delivered Him.** Pilate's was a weak, vacillating, unreliable character. He did not have the courage of his convictions, nor was he a man to enforce respect for his opinions. Rulers of his kind are liable to be unduly lenient and yielding at one time, and correspondingly harsh and cruel at another. The custom had been established at Jerusalem to release to the people, at the time of the Passover, some prisoner whom they desired to set free. The weak governor bethought himself that this custom might come to his aid in solving this difficulty without antagonizing the Jews. He had in jail at that time a most notorious and infamous criminal by the name of Barabbas, a seditionist and murderer. Now Pilate reasoned: Surely they will prefer the gentle Jesus to this dangerous, murderous person. In that sense he put the matter before them, emphasizing the fact that Jesus is called the Christ, the Messiah. He thought the choice would be easy, not reckoning with mob psychology. He was shrewd enough to see, what must have been evident to the disinterested observer from the start, that the accusations named by the Jewish leaders were nothing but trumped-up charges, due to envy on their part, because the common people heard Jesus gladly, and many of them had come to the knowledge of the truth.

The dream of Pilate's wife: V. 19. **When he was set down on the judgment-seat, his wife sent unto him, saying, Have thou nothing to do with that just man; for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of Him.** Here was an interlude. The first force of the attack against Jesus had spent itself, and there was a lull in the storm. The question of Pilate was before the people. And therefore the governor, who had spent some time in the inner room with Jesus in the effort to get at the bottom of the matter, took the opportunity to sit down on the official judgment-chair, which stood elevated upon a stone pavement. He awaited the decision of the people in order to render judgment accordingly. Here he received a warning from an unexpected quarter, for his wife, terrified by a dream she had had the night before, sent to him, beseeching him to have nothing to do with the proceedings against Jesus. She calls Him a just man and wants justice for Him. But apparently this did not influence Pilate in any way. In the apocryphal Acts of Pilate, this incident is carried out very extensively and embellished strongly.

The progress of the trial: V. 20. **But the chief priests and elders persuaded the multitude that they should ask Barabbas, and destroy Jesus.** V. 21. **The governor answered and said unto them, Whether of the twain will ye that I release unto you? They said, Barabbas.** V. 22. **Pilate saith unto them, What shall I do, then, with Jesus which is called Christ? They all say unto him, Let Him be crucified.** V. 23. **And the governor said, Why, what evil hath He done? But they cried out the more, saying, Let Him be crucified.** The fact that Pilate had placed Jesus on a level with Barabbas had been a concession to the Jews, for it placed an innocent man in the same class with a criminal, while in reality there was no comparison. The Jews felt the weakness of Pilate's position and were not slow about taking advantage of it. The chief priests sent their messengers through the crowd to incite the passions ever more strongly. There was not much persuasion needed; a mob is easily swayed, especially when deeds of violence are contemplated. When Pilate therefore put the question to them as to their choice between the two men, they called loudly for the release of the guilty one. Many of the members of this crowd may have been more than half convinced a few short days before that Jesus was a great prophet, if nothing more, but under the skilful prodding of the Sanhedrin's agents they take the part of the enemies of Christ. They have an answer even for Pilate's somewhat perplexed inquiry as to how he was to dispose of Jesus. With increasing volume their hoarse cry rolled down through the narrow streets: Let Him be crucified! And upon Pilate's inane and futile inquiry: What evil has He done, anyway? they realized more strongly than ever that they had the governor in their power. It was no longer a question of Christ's guilt or innocence, but of yielding to the demand of the rabble and the threats of the elders and chief priests. The uproar increased from one minute to the next, and the governor was unable to cope with the situation.

Pilate's last attempt to reason: V. 24. **When Pilate saw that he could prevail nothing, but that rather a tumult was made, he took water, and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this just person; see ye to it.** V. 25. **Then answered all the people, and said, His blood be on us and on our children.** From the beginning, Pilate had miscalculated badly: He had not insisted upon proper legal procedure in demanding definite charges with sufficient testimony; he had not reckoned with mob influence, the chief priests outgener-

aled him. It had now gotten to the point where he was facing a tumult which might develop into an insurrection. And so he continues the weakling's course in trying to shift the blame from his own person. Calling for some water, he washed his hands before all the people as a token of his innocence. He wanted to be held blameless in the entire matter; the guilt of this innocent blood should not rest upon him. In making this statement, he was either a hypocrite or a coward. Either he wanted to salve his conscience by declaring Christ's innocence openly, or he declared that he was forced into a condemnation against his sincere belief. In either case he was guilty, though he places the whole blame on the Jews. "But thus it always happens with the blood of Christ the Lord and with that of His Christians. The older Herod murders the innocent children about Bethlehem. His son murders the holy John the Baptist. And both of them thought they might get some benefit out of such murder. Pilate here also does not consider it a serious matter that he condemns Christ to death. He fondly imagines that, as he thinks of it, God will also think of it, and consider him blameless. But without doubt the wrath of God did not hesitate about coming, and the house, generation, and name of Pilate was annihilated, and body and soul condemned to hell and everlasting fire. There he found out how innocent he was of this blood." 208) The governor's action only brought out a most blood-curdling curse on the part of the people: May the blood of this man be upon us and upon our children! If this man be innocent, and we demand His death as a guilty person, may the punishment of such a crime be visited upon us, and upon our children after us! A little more than a generation later, this terrible curse was visited upon them, then their account was demanded of them with a heavy reckoning, in one of the most horrible judgments of God that history knows of.

Jesus condemned, and mocked by the soldiers: V. 26. **Then released he Barabbas unto them; and when he had scourged Jesus, he delivered Him to be crucified.** V. 27. **Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the common hall, and gathered unto Him the whole band of soldiers.** V. 28. **And they stripped Him, and put on Him a scarlet robe.** V. 29. **And when they had platted a crown of thorns, they put it upon His head, and a reed in His right hand; and they bowed the knee before Him, and mocked Him, saying, Hail, King of the Jews!** V. 30. **And they spit upon Him, and took the reed, and smote Him on the head.** It was not a trial which here came to an end, but a travesty upon justice; Barabbas is released, but Jesus condemned. A type of the redemption, even at that: **The innocent found guilty, the guilty released.** But Pilate adds insult to injury and gives further evidence of the cruelty of small natures by having Jesus scourged, His naked back bent over a post, to which He was tied, and cut to pieces with leather thongs, as it was thus stretched out on the rack of pain. And having thus, as he hoped, fully regained the confidence of the Jews, he spoke the formal sentence of condemnation upon Jesus, sentencing Him to the death of the cross. This was a signal for the soldiers of the procurator, the prisoner was now delivered to their mercy. They first led Him into the judgment-hall of the palace, which was called *praetorium* from the fact that the *praetor*, or Roman magistrate, administered justice in this room in the absence of the higher officer of the empire. Here all the members of the Pretorian guard assembled to have their sport with the helpless victim. For a second time they stripped Him, throwing about Him, instead of His clothes, the scarlet mantle of a soldier, which had some resemblance to the robe of a king or emperor. They braided a crown of sharp thorns and pressed it down upon His head, thus lacerating the skin. They placed an old rod into His hand instead of a scepter. In mock solemnity and with feigned seriousness, they bowed their knees before Him, giving Him homage as King of the Jews. It was an insult to Christ, but also incidentally to the Jews. Their real nature came out in the climax of their torture, when they grew tired of acting, and spit in His face, while some of them took the mock scepter and drove the thorns still more deeply into the sensitive skin of the forehead by sharp blows. And in all these things the prophecies of the Old Testament, reenforced with those of Christ Himself, were fulfilled for the sake of mankind's redemption.

208) Luther, 13, 429.

The Crucifixion and Death.

Matt. 27, 31—56.

V. 31. **And after that they had mocked Him, they took the robe off from Him, and put His own raiment on Him, and led Him away to crucify Him.** V. 32. **And as they came out, they found a man of Cyrene, Simon by name; him they compelled to bear His cross.** V. 33. **And when they were come unto a place called Golgotha, that is to say, a place of a skull,** v. 34. **they gave Him vinegar to drink mingled with gall; and when He had tasted thereof, He would not drink.** V. 35. **And they crucified Him, and parted His garments, casting lots, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, They parted My garments among them, and upon My vesture did they cast lots.** V. 36. **And sitting down they watched Him there;** v. 37. **and set up over His head His accusation written, This is Jesus, the King of the Jews.** The

cruel mockery finally began to pall upon the soldiers; they proceeded to carry out the sentence. Taking off the mantle, they clothed Him once more in His own clothes, and led Him away to crucify Him. The very simplicity of the narrative enhances its effect a hundredfold, besides being internal evidence for the truth of Scriptures. Matthew relates only some of the chief incidents of the day. Just beyond the gates of the city the procession came upon one Simon of Cyrene, a town in African Libya, where many Jews were living. This man they pressed into service, Jesus having proved too weak to carry His cross; for the bearing of the cross was a part of the criminal's punishment. Thus they all came to a place called Golgotha, or the place of the skull, undoubtedly named so from its shape, which resembled that of the upper human skull. It was outside the walls of the city, Heb. 13, 12. Here, in accordance with the prophecy, Ps. 69, 21, they gave Him vinegar or sour wine to drink, mixed with gall, a potion which was supposed to stupefy the senses and deaden the sense of pain; a Jewish custom. But Jesus refused the draught; He wanted to endure all His sufferings with full consciousness, also the pains which attended the act of crucifying. Crucifixion was a punishment of criminals. And among these Christ was reckoned; the chastisement of our peace was upon Him, Is. 53, 5. After the crucifying had been performed, the soldiers amused themselves by gambling for the garments of Jesus, probably in this manner that they first put up the several pieces and cast lots according to the value, each one thus getting a part. The coat they then made a separate stake, since it could not be divided, John 19, 23. 24. Thus again a prophetic word was fulfilled, Ps. 22, 18, and the mocking soldiers unconsciously performed the will of God. They then settled down to their duty of watching their crucified charges, in order that no one might meddle with them, especially not for the purpose of taking any one of them down. They also affixed, at Pilate's command, a sign to the head of the cross, giving the reason for the sentence: This is Jesus, the King of the Jews; written in Latin, Greek, and Hebrew-Aramaic. Thus did Pilate give vent to the bitterness of his heart, for he felt the sting of his defeat at the hands of the Jews. Thus did the soldiers enjoy their final jest at the expense of Jesus and of the nation to which He belonged. And, unconsciously, but none the less truly, they uttered therewith a comforting bit of Gospel-truth, for Jesus of Nazareth is the promised King of the Jews, the Messiah of the world.

The form of execution by means of crucifying had been introduced into Judea by the Romans when this country became a province of the Roman Empire. The Jews had made use of a post or upright pole for hanging, called the cursed tree, Gal. 3, 13; Deut. 21, 23, but the Romans employed some form of a cross-beam, and nailed the body to the cross thus formed by driving nails through the hands and feet. Since there was rarely more than a small strip beneath the feet to support the weight of the body, the pains attending crucifixion must have been the most unbearable torture, a slow straining of muscles and sinews, a gradual wrenching apart of ligaments and joints, to which was usually added the fever caused by the open wounds, Ps. 22, 14—17. By Roman custom the crucified criminal was compelled to die in this excruciating agony, after which his flesh was given to the birds or to wild animals. According to Jewish custom, due partly to reasons of humanity, partly to demands of Levitical purity, the bodies must be taken down and buried. By a combination of the two customs, the practise of breaking the legs, to hasten death, and of giving the mercy-stroke of piercing the body with a lance, was introduced.[209]

The taunts of the people: V. 38. **Then were there two thieves crucified with Him, one on the right hand and another on the left.** V. 39. **And they that passed by reviled Him, wagging their heads** v. 40 **and saying, Thou that destroyest the Temple, and buildest it in three days, save Thyself. If Thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross.** V. 41. **Likewise also the chief priests mocking Him, with the scribes and elders, said,** v. 42. **He saved others; Himself He cannot save. If He be the King of Israel, let Him now come down from the cross, and we will believe Him.** V. 43. **He trusted in God; let Him deliver Him now, if He will have Him, for He said, I am the Son of God.** V. 44. **The thieves also which were crucified with Him cast the same in His teeth.** Christ was numbered with the criminals, with the transgressors, Is. 53, 12. On either side of Him were suspended men that had committed crimes worthy of death. And here the sinless Son of God, by His obedience to the will of the Father for the redemption of the world, was guilty with them, yea, a thousand-, a millionfold more guilty than they. The pains of the cross were intensified by the taunting remarks of the people that thronged out from the city to see the spectacle, most of them still in a bloodthirsty mood, some brought by morbid curiosity, some few in a feeling of sincere affection and sympathy. The large majority improved the occasion after the manner of similar mobs the world over: They shook their heads, not merely in disapproval or in malignant joy, Ps. 22, 7; Job 16, 4; Ps. 109, 25; Is. 37, 22, but as over one whose sound intelligence one is inclined to doubt; they quoted His prophecy concerning the temple of His body, in its garbled form, a prophecy which was even then being fulfilled before their eyes,

209) Schaff, *Commentary, Matthew*, 522. 523.

and urged Him to save Himself and to step down from the cross. To this blasphemy of the members of the mob was added the mockery of the leaders of the Jewish Church, who on this occasion so far forgot their dignity and fear of pollution as to come out and enjoy their supposed triumph, the tortures of Him whom they foolishly considered their victim. They concede that He saved others, they blasphemously conclude that He cannot save Himself. Let Him prove His claim of being the Messiah by stepping down from the cross, whereupon they would gladly believe on Him. They were totally blind in not understanding that such an attempt, if undertaken by Jesus, would utterly frustrate the entire work of redemption. It was necessary for Him to suffer to the end, if full atonement should be made. Even the criminals, the murderers on the other crosses, joined in the maledictions heaped upon Christ, until one of them was led to repentance by the influence of the Lord's patience, Luke 23, 40—43.

The last hours of suffering: V. 45. **Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land unto the ninth hour.** V. 46. **And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?** V. 47. **Some of them that stood there, when they heard that, said, This man calleth for Elias.** V. 48. **And straightway one of them ran, and took a sponge, and filled it with vinegar, and put it on a reed, and gave Him to drink.** V. 49. **The rest said, Let be; let us see whether Elias will come to save Him.** It was now high noon and the brightest time of the day. But suddenly the sun's rays were cut off, not by the obstructing circle of the moon, for it was now the time of full moon, when an eclipse of the sun is impossible (this would also not last for three full hours), but by a miracle of God. It was an extraordinary phenomenon, associated with the death of Jesus in the most intimate and mysterious manner. According to some accounts, this darkness was chronicled even by secular historians, together with the earthquake that followed. Over the whole world this darkness extended, shrouding all things in its mysterious obscurity, as on the Black Good Friday of early American history. In these three hours the Son of God was obliged to taste and endure the full force, the full horror of the divine wrath over the sins of mankind. Here the Vicar of mankind was in prison and judgment. Forsaken, rejected by God: that is the torture of hell. What deep humiliation for the eternal Son of God to enter into the depths of everlasting death and torment! But by His enduring the torments of hell we have been liberated, for in the midst of this most terrible Passion He remained obedient to God and thus conquered wrath, hell, and damnation for us. When He uttered His cry of extreme pain and terror, in the Aramaic tongue, some of the bystanders again took occasion to mock Him. Jesus had quoted the words of the prophet, Ps. 22, 1, using the dialect to which He was accustomed. But they, either deliberately or foolishly, misunderstood or pretended to misunderstand Him to be calling for the help of Elijah. And while one of them, upon His second cry for something to quench His thirst, had enough feeling of compassion to reach up a sponge filled with vinegar to His lips, the others jeeringly sought to restrain him by bidding him wait until they might see whether Elijah would actually come to help Jesus. All this taunting mockery was a fulfilment of Old Testament prophecy, Ps. 69, 22. Not one word of the Lord regarding the Passion of the Savior fell to the ground.

The death of Jesus: V. 50. **Jesus, when He had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost.** V. 51. **And, behold, the veil of the Temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent;** v. 52. **and the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose,** v. 53. **and came out of the graves after His resurrection, and went into the Holy City, and appeared unto many.** Christ, in His capacity as Vicar and Mediator, as the Substitute for all mankind, had now endured the eternal tortures, the full punishment for the sins of the whole world. While darkness had covered the earth, He had fought His last great battle and remained victorious. And so His last cry was not that of a soul giving up the unequal battle, but that of a victor. Of His own free will and power He gave His soul into the keeping of His heavenly Father. He went into death as its conqueror. But this was like a signal to the forces of nature. The great, costly, and heavy curtain which separated the Holy Place of the Temple from the Most Holy Place, and which was never lifted but on the great Day of Atonement, to enable the high priest to bring the sacrifice for the sins of the people into the presence of God, was torn into two pieces, from the top to the bottom. This was just at the time of evening sacrifice, and must have made a deep impression upon the priest that was officiating at the altar of incense. God here indicated that there was no longer any need for this veil. The sin, which formerly separated God and man, has been removed by the one great sacrifice of the true High Priest, and there are no further sacrifices necessary, Heb. 9. At the same time, an earthquake shook the city and country, causing rocks to be torn asunder and opening many rock-graves of the saints, of such as had died in the hope of the Messiah. Their bodies having been brought back to life, these people left their graves after the resurrection of Christ and were seen by many inhabitants of the city of Jerusalem. This in-

dicated that the cruel reign of death had now been thrown off, that it is impossible for death to hold the bodies of them that fall asleep in Jesus.

The effect of Christ's death on the bystanders: V. 54. **Now when the centurion, and they that were with him, watching Jesus, saw the earthquake, and those things that were done, they feared greatly, saying, Truly, this was the Son of God!** V. 55. **And many women were there beholding afar off, which followed Jesus from Galilee, ministering unto Him;** v. 56. **among which was Mary Magdalene, and Mary, the mother of James and Joses, and the mother of Zebedee's children.** The centurion and the soldiers of his band that had been detailed to watch the cross were deeply impressed by the remarkable evidences in nature that accompanied the death of this man whom they had mocked with the rest. A great fear fell upon them, not of superstition, but of supernatural influence. They felt that it was God speaking to them in these phenomena. And the captain voiced, not only the impression, but the conviction of all: Truly, the Son of God was this man! The happenings of that morning, together with the knowledge that the Jews were expecting a Messiah with divine attributes, which every intelligent person living in Judea was bound to learn in the course of time, had opened his eyes and given him that understanding which is necessary for salvation. In this hour of trial also, as often since, the women proved themselves more courageous than the men. They did not come forward to the very foot of the cross, as did Mary, the mother of Jesus, but they were witnesses of all that transpired there from some little distance. Some of these women had held positions of wealth and influence, but had readily and gladly left their homes, where their presence was not required, and devoted themselves to the ministry of Christ. The names of a few of them have been recorded, in lasting remembrance of this occasion, namely, Mary Magdalene, Mary, the mother of James and Joseph, and Salome, the mother of James and John, the sons of Zebedee. It is a laudable thing when women that have the time, the ability, and the means to serve their Lord freely give of these talents and place themselves in the service of Christ.

The Burial of Christ. Matt. 27, 57—66.

The burial of Christ: V. 57. **When the even was come, there came a rich man of Arimathea, named Joseph, who also himself was Jesus' disciple.** V. 58. **He went to Pilate, and begged the body of Jesus. Then Pilate commanded the body to be delivered.** V. 59. **And when Joseph had taken the body, he wrapped it in a clean linen cloth,** v. 60. **and laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn out in the rock; and he rolled a great stone to the door of the sepulcher and departed.** V. 61. **And there was Mary Magdalene and the other Mary, sitting over against the sepulcher.** In the time of trial and greatest danger, when the chosen apostles of the Lord failed in their loyalty, some of those that had secretly clung to Him were made manifest. It was now the first evening according to the reckoning of the Jews, the time just preceding sunset, toward six o'clock. The bodies of such as were hanged were not permitted to remain on the cross until the next day, which began with sunset, Deut. 21, 22. 23. Therefore Joseph of Arimathea, or Ramathaim Zophim, 1 Sam. 1, 1, a rich counselor of the Jews, a member of the Sanhedrin, who had not voted in favor of Christ's death, made the necessary arrangements for the burial of his Master. He secured permission for obtaining the body of Jesus from the governor, after which he took down the body of the Lord from the cross with the aid of Nicodemus, John 19, 39, wrapped it in a new linen burial-cloth, and finally deposited it in his own new tomb, a grave hewn into the rock in his own garden. Jesus, in His death, received all the honors which the prosperous Jews expected for themselves, far more than He had ever been accustomed to during His life, Is. 53, 12. It was a fine token of veneration and affection, and teaches some lessons. "That is, then, the fruit of the death of Christ the Lord, that the weakest, most fearful hearts come forward without dread or fear, confess Christ, bury His body, which was hanging there in all dishonor, with all signs of respect, in order to testify to the Jews, the high priests, Pilate, and all enemies of Christ that they regard Him as the Son of God, and thus glory in Him, hope in His kingdom, and are full of comfort even now that He is dead and every one is of the opinion that His career is definitely ended. For that is what Mark and Luke mean when they say that Joseph waited for the kingdom of God, that is, he hoped God would by this man organize a new kingdom on earth, forgive sins, give the Holy Ghost and eternal salvation. For that is really what the kingdom of God means, as it is promised in the prophets to be organized by Christ or the Messiah. . . . We should also note the example of Joseph, who had ordered his grave to be made while he was still living. From which it is evident that he did not forget his last hour, as people generally do. For every one makes all arrangements for this earthly life, as though we should stay here forever. But those that fear God rather consider their whole life here upon earth as a pilgrimage, where there is nothing continuing, but where we must always be looking forward to the true fatherland. . . . Thus pious Joseph also did. He was rich and a respected citizen of Jerusalem, yet his thoughts were ever centered: Here there is nothing continuing, thou must finally be buried. And therefore he has

a grave prepared in his garden, where he otherwise took his pleasure, where he intended to look forward to the joyful resurrection with all saints, through the Lord Jesus Christ." 210) While these last rites were being performed for the beloved Master, and a heavy stone was then being rolled before the door of the tomb, two of the faithful women, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary, sat opposite the sepulcher, mourning the loss of their Lord and their Friend, but taking careful note of everything that was done.

Guarding against the theft of the body: **V. 62. Now the next day, that followed the day of the preparation, the chief priests and Pharisees came together unto Pilate,** v. 63. **saying, Sir, we remember that that deceiver said while He was yet alive, After three days I will rise again.** V. 64. **Command therefore that the sepulcher be made sure until the third day, lest His disciples come by night, and steal Him away, and say unto the people, He is risen from the dead; so the last error shall be worse than the first.** V. 65. **Pilate said unto them, Ye have a watch; go your way, make it as sure as ye can.** V. 66. **So they went, and made the sepulcher sure, sealing the stone and setting a watch.** Whether it was due to a bad conscience or to vindictiveness, cannot be determined, but the Jewish chiefs even now were not satisfied. The day of preparation closed at sundown, and they were so anxious about a certain matter that they disregarded the rules of the great festival. Jesus was hardly laid into the grave when their delegation attended upon Pilate. It had occurred to them that yonder seducer, pointing contemptuously in the direction of the cross, had predicted that He would rise on the third day. What they now wanted was a way of safeguarding the tomb, in order that the body might not be stolen by fanatical disciples and His resurrection then proclaimed. In that event, they believe that the last delusion, the belief in the resurrection of Jesus, would be worse than the first one was, the belief in His Messiahship. Pilate, in a somewhat gruff manner, as though heartily disgusted with the whole affair, granted the request: Have your watch: there will be mighty little need of it, I am sure; secure the tomb as ye know how! This they proceeded to do in as thorough a manner as possible. They stretched a cord across the stone, fastening it on either side of the door with wax, upon which the seal of the governor was stamped. This was done in the presence and with the aid of the watch detailed for that purpose, the soldiers finally remaining to guard the tomb. Without knowing or in the least intending it, the Jews here prepared the way for a sound proof of the resurrection of Christ. The testimony of the very men whom they had chosen, soldiers that were entirely disinterested, would be strong evidence in favor of the great resurrection miracle.

Summary. *Judas, in false remorse over his betrayal of Christ, commits suicide when the Lord is delivered to Pilate, while Jesus Himself is tried before the Roman court, sees Barabbas preferred to Him by the mob, is condemned to death by crucifixion by the court, though no guilt is found in Him, suffers the pains of crucifixion, dies on the cross, and is buried by His friends.*

210) Luther, 13, 499. 505.

CHAPTER 28.

The Resurrection of Christ. Matt. 28, 1—15.

The open grave: V. 1. **In the end of the Sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to see the sepulcher.** V. 2. **And, behold, there was a great earthquake; for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it.** V. 3. **His countenance was like lightning and his raiment white as snow;** v. 4. **and for fear of him the keepers did shake, and became as dead men.** As the death of Christ had been attended by supernatural signs to call the attention of the whole world to the redemption then being accomplished upon Calvary, so His resurrection was accompanied by an uproar in nature which pointed to a most unusual happening. In the late hours of the Sabbath-day, the seventh day of the week, as this day was about to merge into a new Sabbath-week, that is, very early on Sunday morning, before the sun rose, the same faithful women that had watched the burial of the Lord went out to see the grave and to take the first steps in the process of embalming the Lord's body. They had not yet reached the garden, when a mighty quaking shook the earth, caused by the fact that an angel of the Lord came down from heaven and rolled away the stone from the door of the tomb, which he then used as a seat for himself. Not to open the grave for Christ was he come, but to show the empty grave to the whole world, to give absolute and undeniable evidence of the fact that the resurrection had taken place in spite of stone and seal and watch. The evangelist says that the appearance of the angel was like lightning, and his garment was white as snow. It was a fearful apparition to the superstitious soldiers to gaze upon one of the holy angels of God. It overwhelmed them; they fell over in a faint, and became as dead men. When God wants to carry out His will with regard

to the salvation of mankind, no sinful man, no enemy, may resist Him. The resurrection of Jesus was the seal and final proof for the full atonement gained for the whole world, and all the efforts of the Jews and of Satan to hinder it were unavailing.

The message of the angel: V. 5. **And the angel answered and said unto the women, Fear not ye; for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified.** V. 6. **He is not here; for He is risen, as He said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay.** V. 7. **And go quickly, and tell His disciples that He is risen from the dead; and, behold, He goeth before you into Galilee; there shall ye see Him; lo, I have told you.** V. 8. **And they departed quickly from the sepulcher with fear and great joy, and did run to bring His disciples word.** In the course of the morning a number of angels came to the grave to partake of the holy joy of Christ's resurrection, as the various gospel-accounts relate. But here only the one is mentioned, as the spokesman to the two women remaining, Mary Magdalene having returned to the city upon seeing the empty grave. The message of the angel was that which characterizes all Gospel-preaching, an admonition not to fear, just as the Christmas herald had said to the disciples. The message of the Gospel is one that must banish all terror of sin and death from the heart, and fill it with holy joy in the Lord. Jesus indeed had been crucified, but they should no longer seek Him with the dead. For He is risen, as He had told them, time and again, as they should have known from the Old Testament prophecies. The place where the Lord had lain was before them, but His body had been released from the bonds of death, which He had conquered. Now they should not delay, but go at once with the glorious news to the disciples, reminding them, incidentally, of the Lord's promise to precede them into Galilee, chapter 26, 32. While the appearance of the messenger, of the holy angel of God, filled them with fear, his message of the resurrection of their Lord and Master filled them with the greatest delight. Hurriedly they leave the grave, to run and bring the good tidings to the disciples. "That the angel is so much concerned about announcing the resurrection of Christ to the disciples who were now lying there with lack of faith and a bad conscience, is a certain indication that the Lord Jesus Christ has risen for the sake and comfort of those of little faith, yea, for those without faith, in order that they might have the benefit of His work, find help and refuge with Him.... That Christ lives, He lives for our benefit, that we should ever be defended by Him and protected from all distress." 211)

The appearance of Jesus: V. 9. **And as they went to tell His disciples, behold, Jesus met them, saying, All hail! And they came and held Him by the feet, and worshiped Him.** V. 10. **Then said Jesus unto them, Be not afraid; go tell My brethren that they go into Galilee, and there shall they see Me.** This was undoubtedly the first appearance of the risen Christ. As they were hurrying cityward, and probably before they had left the boundaries of the garden, Jesus came to meet them, giving them the wonderful greeting, All hail! Rejoice! There is only joy and peace and lasting happiness in the kingdom of the resurrected Lord. The women, recognizing Him, fell down at His feet in the fulness of their joy and adoration. At the same time, the exuberance and the excitement caused them to cling to Him, as though in fear of losing Him once more. And therefore Jesus again calms them. No fear should live in their hearts henceforth and forever, but only the desire to bring the joyful news to the apostles, whom He here lovingly calls His brethren. They were now nearer to Him than ever before. In spite of their defection, He knew that their faith was not lost forever, but only hidden by fear. This message was intended as cheering, consoling tidings, to renew faith and hope and trust in their hearts. In the same way, all believers in Christ and His resurrection are now the brothers and sisters of Christ in the fullest and best meaning of the term. For by and through their faith they have become partakers of all the glorious fruits of Christ's resurrection. And thus they have been placed by God the Father on the same level with His own Son Jesus Christ, being coheirs of the eternal joy and blessedness with Him.

The report of the watch: V. 11. **Now when they were going, behold, some of the watch came into the city, and showed unto the chief priests all the things that were done.** V. 12. **And when they were assembled with the elders, and had taken counsel, they gave large money unto the soldiers,** v. 13. **saying, Say ye, His disciples came by night, and stole Him away while we slept.** V. 14. **And if this come to the governor's ears, we will persuade him, and secure you.** V. 15. **So they took the money, and did as they were taught; and this saying is commonly reported among the Jews until this day.** While all this was taking place, and while the women were hurrying to the city with their joyful news, the soldiers of the watch gradually awakened from their stupor into which they had been thrown. The damage had evidently been done, and they must make the best of it, for there was no denying the facts. A few of them were delegated to make the report of the morning's happenings to the chief priests, who were responsible for their presence at the grave. The matter was serious enough to demand a meeting of the Sanhedrin,

211) Luther, 13, 520. 521.

in order to consider ways and means to prevent damage to themselves and their cause. It was finally resolved to bribe the soldiers, to give them a considerable sum of money. They were not at all careful about the amount, they gave with a free hand; for the lie which they taught the soldiers to repeat was surely the essence of stupidity. They were to spread the report that the disciples of Christ came by night, while they were sleeping, and stole the body. The soldiers are to have been asleep, and yet to have seen the thieves, and known that they were disciples! Of far greater importance to the soldiers was the promise which the members of the Council were forced to give, namely, that they would guarantee to straighten out the matter in case the governor should ever find out about it; they would vouch for their safety. For a Roman soldier to be found asleep at his post was anything but an easy matter for him. So the ridiculous report went out among the Jews and became a common rumor among them, taxing their credulity, to be sure, but saving their face, as they fondly hoped.

The Great Missionary Command.

Matt. 28, 16—20.

V. 16. **Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, into a mountain where Jesus had appointed them.** V. 17. **And when they saw Him, they worshiped Him; but some doubted.** V. 18. **And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth.** V. 19. **Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:** v. 20. **teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you. And, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen.** Jesus had named a certain mountain in Galilee to His disciples, where He would meet them after His resurrection, but we know neither the time of this meeting nor the location of the mountain. It had been His express command that they assemble there, and after they had received the confirmation of this word by the message of the women on Easter morning, they went to keep the appointment. When He appeared before them there, some of them fell down before Him in glad adoration, but others still were in doubt. They could neither believe the fact of His resurrection nor that it was actually their Lord who here appeared before them. Jesus therefore drew nearer that they might recognize His features more exactly. But principally He depended for the effect of His presence upon His words. The speech of Jesus is majestic, but His whole bearing was friendly and intended to take away all apprehension of whatever kind among them all. His final commission is a wonderful bit of solemn oratory. As He stands before them, in His spiritual body, true man as ever during His earthly life, but no longer in humility and weakness: all power in heaven above and on earth beneath is given to Him. He is the almighty God, with unlimited authority. And since this is true, therefore they, in going forth, in doing the work of their apostolic mission, should make disciples of all nations. The whole earth should be their sphere of activity. And this discipling should be done by two means of grace. First there is the means of making disciples by baptizing in the name of the Triune God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; into the name, as confessing the name which summarizes the entire Christian creed. The second means of making disciples is that of teaching them to observe closely all things which Jesus has committed to His disciples, to expound to them the counsel of God to their salvation. Not human notions, but the Word of the Gospel, the inspired Word of God shall be the content of all preaching in the Church of Jesus Christ, no more, no less. And if His commission is carried out in this manner, then His promise also will stand secure, that He will be with us all the days until the end of time. When this age comes to its close, when He Himself will usher in the new age by the dawn of His Judgment Day, then only will the work of the Church have come to an end.

Summary. *Jesus arises from the dead amidst the quaking of the earth, the angel shows the women the empty tomb and bids them bring the tidings to the disciples; Christ, appearing to the same women, confirms the message, while the chief priests and elders take steps to spread lies about the resurrection. Christ finally appears to His disciples in a body on a mountain in Galilee and gives them the great missionary command.*

THE BAPTISM OF CHILDREN.

In view of the fact that the rights of children, so called and real, are being discussed more and more at teachers' conventions, mothers' meetings, neighborhood clubs, federations of woman's clubs, and in countless other organizations, it seems almost like an anachronism to hear the objection to children's baptism voiced time and again with great emphasis and bitterness.

For there is, first of all, the plain command of Christ with reference to children. "Make disciples of all nations," He says, Matt. 28, 19, and He mentions Baptism as the first method, not without a very good reason. There is His command to baptize the children, for they surely make up a considerable part of the nations. If the objection is made that children are not specifically named, we may ask: Are the women specifically named? And was it so self-evident in the days when the women were largely regarded as chattels that they should be placed on an equality with the men of the nation, presumably the representatives of the nation? The Apostle Paul says, Col. 2, 11: "Ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without

hands." And in verse 12 he explains this: "Buried with him in Baptism." But if Baptism is to take the place of circumcision by such a close analogy, it follows that it is to be administered to children also. In his great sermon on Pentecost Day, Peter tells the multitude: "Repent, and be baptized every one of you. . . . For the promise is unto you and to your children," Acts 2, 38. 39. Again a plain command to include the children in the blessings of Baptism.

There is, furthermore, the fact that children can believe and do believe, which is an urgent reason for baptizing them. Christ says: "Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. . . . Whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in Me," Matt. 18, 2. 6. There can be no clearer words than these to show that Christ regards them as believers in Him, and without faith in Him it would be impossible for them to enter into the kingdom of heaven. And again He says: "Suffer the little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not; for of such is the kingdom of God. Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein," Mark 10, 14. 15. Human language can hardly be made plainer.

There are, in the next place, the facts of Scriptural history in support of the baptism of children. It would be doing outrage to the common understanding of the term, if the word "household," Acts 16, 15, or the expression: "He was baptized, and all his," Acts 16, 33, cp. verses 32 and 34, should exclude the children.

There are, finally, the facts of the history of the early Church, which make child baptism appear as a custom which had always been practised in the congregations. There was a difference, of course; those converted in adult life receiving Baptism at that time, and since that was the case in most of the mission-stations, it follows that adult baptism was more prevalent in the early centuries than child baptism. But it seems to have been the custom from the very first to baptize the children of Christian parents. A few examples will suffice to show this truth. Irenaeus, bishop of Lyons in the second century, says that infants and little ones, boys and youths, and aged persons are baptized. Origen, who lived a little later, writes that the Church had received the tradition to give Baptism to infants from the apostles. Accordingly, a council held in the city of Carthage, A. D. 253, declared that Baptism should be denied to no human being from his birth. This answer was given with reference to the question whether children should be baptized before the eighth day, or on that very day. Tertullian's objection to infant baptism, at the end of the second century, shows that the practise was universal. Gregory of Nazianz, in the fourth century, demanded that infants be baptized at once, especially if there were any danger of their not living.

Our children belong to Christ, and to Him we bring them in Baptism.[212]

212) Cp. *Syn. Ber.* Mittl. Distr., 1910; *Lehre und Wehre*, 1909, Feb.; 1910, Sept.

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO SAINT MARK.

INTRODUCTION.

Though Mark, as the author of the second gospel is called, was not himself an apostle, he was the pupil and companion of two great apostles, Peter and Paul. He was a Jew by birth, Col. 4, 10, and his Jewish name was John, which means "God is gracious." His surname, which he adopted when he became a Christian, was Mark, which means "Mallet," Acts 12, 12. 25; 13, 5. 13; 15, 37. He was the son of a woman of Jerusalem who later became a prominent member of the congregation in that city. Her name was Mary, Acts 12, 12—17. It was she who offered her house, at the first critical period in the history of the young congregation, for devotional meetings. It was to her house that Peter went upon his miraculous deliverance from prison, Acts 12, 12—17. It is very probable, from Gospel history, that Mark had had an acquaintance with Jesus even before the great Passion. Many commentators think that he is identical with the young man who, according to his own report, left the linen cloth with which he was clothed on the night of Christ's capture and fled naked from Gethsemane, chapter 14, 51. Mark was especially intimate with Peter, by whom he had been converted, if the usual manner of speaking of this event has been followed in this case, 1 Pet. 5, 13; Acts 12, 12. His intimacy with Barnabas is explained by the fact that he was his cousin, Col. 4, 10. Through Barnabas he came into closer contact with Paul, and he accompanied Paul and Barnabas on their first missionary journey as an attendant or assistant. At that time, however, he was not yet firmly established in Christian fortitude, for he left them at Perga, in Pamphylia, and returned to Jerusalem, much to the displeasure of Paul, Acts 13, 5. 13. For this reason Paul refused to take him on the next journey, while Barnabas was willing to overlook the temporary weakness, Acts 15, 38. There was a sharp contention over the matter at the time, with the result that Paul and Barnabas parted company, Barnabas taking Mark with him to Cyprus, while Paul chose Silas, Acts 15, 36—40. But the estrangement

was only temporary, for about ten years afterwards Mark was in Rome as one of Paul's fellow-workers unto the kingdom of God and a comfort in his imprisonment, Col. 4, 10. 11; Philemon 24; 2 Tim. 4, 11. But Mark also assisted Peter in his work, both in Babylon, 1 Pet. 5, 13, and in Rome, Rev. 14, 8; 16, 19; 17, 5; 18, 10. 21. This is all that the New Testament records of him. From fairly reliable tradition it appears that he afterwards founded the church at Alexandria, in Egypt, where he is supposed to have died as a martyr. In 827 his relics were removed to Venice, where a magnificent church was built in his honor, a worthy monument to the present day.

Even the casual reader of the Gospel of Mark is apt to notice the fact that it was undoubtedly written for Roman Christians that used the Latin language. Quotations from the Old Testament are relatively few, chapter 1, 2. 3; 7, 6. 10; 11, 17; 12, 19; 14, 27, especially as compared with Matthew; Aramaic words and expressions are usually translated, 3, 17; 5, 41; 7, 11. 34; 10, 46; 14, 36; 15, 22. 34; Jewish customs are explained, 7, 2—5; 12, 42; 14, 12; 15, 42; there is a frequent use of Latin expressions, like "legion," "centurion," "quadrans," and others.

Mark wrote as the "interpreter" of Peter, as the historian Eusebius has it; it is authentic information concerning Gospel history, which he wrote down accurately. He was the literary editor and publisher of the oral Gospel which he had heard so often out of the mouth of his teacher. The influence of Peter is evident throughout the book in the mention of significant details. We are told that Peter's house was that of Simon and Andrew, 1, 29; these two brothers are mentioned at the beginning of Christ's public ministry, 1, 16; expressions peculiar to Peter occur, 16, 7. 19 (cp. 1 Pet. 3, 22); he gives the most detailed account of Peter's denial, 14, 54. 72.

The purpose of Mark's Gospel, as he himself states, is to show the beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, 1, 1. This Gospel owed its power and wonderful success to the personality of Jesus Christ, who, by His deeds, His miracles, proved Himself the Son of God with power, 3, 11; 5, 7; 15, 39, and brought the kingdom of God, 1, 14; 9, 1; 10, 15. 25; 12, 34. The miracles of Christ are therefore emphasized, the doctrinal discourses being given in brief form only.

The distinctive features of the Gospel according to Mark are its pithy, yet comprehensive style, with vivid flashes of portrayal; his characteristic "immediately" or "straightway," which occurs in the Greek text more than forty times; the rapid shifts or quick changes of scene; the fact that the chronological sequence is fair, but not exact. Of the miracles which he relates two are distinctive of his Gospel, that of the healing of the deaf, 7, 31—37, and that of the blind man, whom Jesus healed by slow stages, 8, 22—26. A most interesting feature of the Gospel are the retirements of Jesus, during which He prepared Himself for a new stage in His work as Redeemer, 1, 12; 3, 7; 6, 31; 6, 46; 7, 24; 7, 31; 9, 2; 11, 1; 14, 34, principally by devoting Himself to prayer.

The Gospel was probably written at Rome in the last part of the sixties, no reference to the destruction of Jerusalem being made. Whether it was written in the presence and at the suggestion of Peter or not, there can be no doubt as to its authenticity. The unanimous testimony of early Christian history and literature points to Mark as the author. To argue with critics that deny the possibility of miracles and therefore want to doubt the Gospel of Mark, has little value. A Christian knows in faith that miracles are possible, and gives all the more credence to a Gospel account that relates them with all the signs of genuineness. No valid reason has been adduced by any critic to cause us to alter our firm belief that we have, in the Gospel of Mark, the writing of this disciple of the Lord, and therefore the Word of the Lord Himself.

The outline of the book is much like that of Matthew. There is a short introduction concerning the history of John the Baptist. The Messianic work of Christ in Galilee is then given in some detail, with special emphasis upon the miracles. In the last part of the book the Messianic work of the Lord in Judea is spoken of at some length. The book closes with a history of the Passion, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ.

CHAPTER 1.

The Ministry of John the Baptist.

Mark 1, 1—8.

The superscription of the Gospel: V. 1. **The beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.** It is characteristic of the evangelist's nature, which expresses itself in his style of writing, that he loses no time in preliminary discussions and long introductions. He has a message, the one great message for all men of all times. And it sets the limits and boundaries of the preaching of the divine message for all time. The Gospel, the good news of the salvation of all men, is centered in Jesus Christ, who is its beginning, middle, and end: Jesus, the Redeemer, the Savior; and Christ, the Anointed One of God, our great Prophet, Priest, and King. Both His divine-human person and His miraculous office are placed before our eyes. Only this message is the Gospel, the good news. All other messages, that do not lead to Christ, that do not emanate

from Christ, are false messages. That is Mark's emphasis.

John's ministry in agreement with prophetic vision: V. 2. **As it is written in the prophets, Behold, I send My messenger before Thy face, which shall prepare Thy way before Thee.** V. 3. **The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make His paths straight.** V. 4. **John did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins.** Two of the prophets of olden times had distinctly described the person and the work of John the Baptist, and the evangelist combines their prophecies for the purpose of brevity. The first prophecy, Mal. 3, 1, is one in which the God of Israel promises to send His personal messenger before the Messiah. And this messenger, by the message which should be imparted to him and which he was to proclaim before the people of the nation, had the purpose, the object, of preparing the way for the Messiah. A thorough preparation of the way was necessary and should be accomplished by the message entrusted to the herald. In the second prophecy, Is. 40, 3, the distinctive contents of the message are given. It is a voice, preaching, which is heard; not a soft, gentle, and obscure whispering as of one not at all sure of his ground, and not filled with the conviction of the divinity of his message, but a loud calling, to awaken sinners from their sleep of security and indifference. A distinguishing feature: It would be heard, not in the midst of the capital or in the halls of the learned of the people, but out in the wilderness, far from the abodes of men. Simple, but impressive its import: Make ready the way of the Lord; make smooth the highway before Him. It is a spiritual coming of which the prophet speaks; it is the heart and mind that must be prepared for the coming of this Lord, who intends to establish His throne in the hearts of the believers. Only the penitent, humble sinners are admitted into this Kingdom. The rocks of self-righteousness, of pride and self-conceit, of a religion of works, will not permit the King to enter into the hearts. These must be removed so thoroughly that not a trace is left behind. That is the sum of the herald's preaching, of his work in preparation for Christ's coming. In fulfilling this prophecy, John the Baptist was out in the wilderness; he appeared out in the arid regions between Jerusalem and the Dead Sea, where the hills slope downward to the Jordan; he began his ministry as one that baptized. He made use of this rite, by God's express command, to emphasize still more strongly his preaching. For his was a proclamation of the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. It was not a mere proselyte baptism, nor was it altogether identical with that of Jesus and the New Testament sacrament. Those that really repented of their sins received remission, forgiveness of their sins, and this remission was sealed unto them by the baptism which was administered unto them by John.

The effect of John's preaching: V. 5. **And there went out unto him all the land of Judea and they of Jerusalem, and were all baptized of him in the river of Jordan, confessing their sins.** A man with a message such as John's, supplemented by the oddity of his dress and habits, was bound to attract attention anywhere, even where his message was not welcome in its real significance. The inhabitants of the Judean hills heard of the hermit first, and came out of curiosity. But the fame of the wilderness preacher traveled fast, and soon the haughty people of the capital, probably with a deprecatory air, set out over the hills to see this strange man with the stranger message. And the effect of his preaching was truly remarkable. Great masses of people, men and women, crowded to his preaching and to his baptism. It was the custom, at the baptism of proselytes, not to administer the rite until the candidate had affirmed most solemnly that he would renounce all idolatrous worship, all heathenish superstitions, and had promised full and undivided allegiance to the Law of Moses. Here the individual confession of sins preceded baptism. As John himself was sincere, he tolerated no sham and deceit, no mere lip-service. He applied the words of the prophet. Those that were bowed down by the full realization of their sinfulness he cheered by the reference to the free grace of God, to those that were proud and conceited he emphasized the necessity of humility, upon those that were inclined to be deceitful he urged simplicity and purity of heart.

John's appearance and message of Christ: V. 6. **And John was clothed with camel's hair and with a girdle of skins about his loins; and he did eat locusts and wild honey;** v. 7. **and preached, saying, There cometh One mightier than I after me, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to stoop down and unloose.** V. 8. **I indeed have baptized you with water; but He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost.** The appearance of John did much to call attention to his message, especially as the people of Judea were familiar with the description which the Old Testament gives of the great prophet Elijah, 2 Kings 1, 8. His one garment was woven of camel's hair, by no means a stylish and comfortable garment, since he was seeking neither luxury nor easy living. A rough girdle of leather held the garment in place about the loins. His food was in full harmony with his clothing: an edible form of locust, Lev. 11, 22, and the wild honey found in the clefts of rocks or sweated out of certain trees growing in the wilderness. This mode of life he did not merely affect for the sake of making an impression. This was the clothing which he always wore; it was the food which he had always eaten, the

customary meal. And now it appears that the message of the prophet, followed by baptism unto forgiveness, was all preparatory to the most characteristic preaching, that concerning Jesus. He, that one man, that is stronger, that has more power than I, is coming after me, is even now ready to be revealed before you. So great is the difference and contrast between them that John does not even feel himself worthy to perform a service for Him which a slave might covet. He is not worthy to stoop down before this greater Man und unloose the straps of His sandals. That was true, unaffected humility, such as is found in all those that really are serving the Lord. Cp. 1 Tim. 1, 15. The work of this Man that was thus expected could be summarized in a short sentence: He will baptize you with the Holy Ghost. And this in contrast to the mere baptism with water, which John was sent to do. That is a feature, the most significant part of Christ's ministry and work for mankind, the baptism with, the communication of, the Holy Ghost, John 20, 20. There may not always be evidence of His presence in extraordinary manifestations, as in the early days of the Church, but the Holy Spirit lives, by the gift of Christ, in the hearts of all that have come to faith. And the evidence of His presence is never entirely wanting, if the Christian but make diligent use of the means of grace, through which alone the Spirit is communicated to them at the present time, especially the Word of the Gospel and the Lord's Supper. There will be a growth in grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ, the Savior; there will be cheerfulness in the midst of the various distresses and tribulations of these latter days; there will be, above all, the greater willingness to serve Him in His kingdom, in everlasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness.

The Baptism of Christ and the Beginning of His Ministry. Mark 1, 9—20.

V. 9. **And it came to pass in those days that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptized of John in Jordan.** V. 10. **And straightway coming up out of the water, He saw the heavens opened, and the Spirit like a dove descending upon Him;** v. 11. **and there came a voice from heaven, saying, Thou art My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.** "In those days," while John was having such marvelous success with his message and with his baptizing, in the days when the crowds that resorted to him were largest. Note: Jesus does not expect John to look for Him, though He might have expected that of one who, by his own confession, was lower than Himself. The King goes forth to seek the herald. From Nazareth Jesus came: there He had lived with His parents during all those years of preparation, concerning which we have only the most meager accounts, Luke 2, 51. 52. His fellow-citizens in that little mountain town had no idea of the greatness of Him whom they were harboring in their midst, whom they knew only as the carpenter, the son of Joseph. The evangelist adds the geographical note "of Galilee" on account of his Roman readers, who might be unfamiliar with the location of towns in Palestine. The various incidents of the story are omitted by Mark; for his purpose the statement as to the fact of Christ's baptism is sufficient. But the miracle which followed the baptism is important. For when Jesus ascended the bank of the river, as He was leaving the water, there was a manifestation of the Trinity, of which the Christians of all times should know. Jesus had just set foot upon dry ground, when the heavens were cleft open above Him, as though cut apart by a knife. This Jesus saw distinctly; it was a revelation for His benefit. He, who had just received baptism unto the remission of sins, not for His own, but for those of the world that were resting upon Him, was shown the open heaven. It was a manifestation to strengthen Him at the beginning of His ministry, in which He must work out the redemption of mankind. This was further emphasized by the fact that the Holy Spirit, coming down out of the open heavens, descended not merely upon Him, but literally into Him. He was here, in the truest sense of the term, baptized with the Holy Ghost and with power. God, His God, here anointed Him with the oil of gladness, above His fellows, Ps. 45, 7; Heb. 1, 9. Therefore the Spirit abode in Jesus, filled His heart and mind, made Him ready, according to His human nature, to perform the work for which He had been born into the world. Here Christ really began to be Christ, as Luther remarks. And His weak human nature needed the assistance of the Spirit. The works peculiar to the redemption of the world were of a nature which no mere man could hope to perform. In the same way there was also a definite reason for the assuring words from heaven when the Father called down: Thou art My beloved Son. The prophet like unto Moses, out of the people of Israel, was about to take up His life-work. But this prophet was, at the same time, the Son of the Most High, beloved of His heavenly Father, who took pleasure in Him, who here publicly declared His complete approval of the work undertaken by Jesus. It was an assurance which stood the Savior in good stead more than once in the course of His ministry and His Passion. Note also: John the Baptist saw and heard all these occurrences as well as Jesus Himself, John 1, 32—34. He was a witness for the sake of himself and for the sake of his further message to the people. It is a matter of great consolation to us to know that the Triune God, and all the persons of the Godhead, has a definite share in our salvation, that Jesus entered upon His ministry with the approval and cooperation of the Spirit and the Father.

The temptation: V. 12. **And immediately the Spirit driveth Him into the wilderness.**

V. 13. And He was there in the wilderness forty days, tempted of Satan; and was with the wild beasts; and the angels ministered unto Him. "Immediately," not a mere introductory word here as so often in Mark's Gospel, but emphasizing quick action. Christ was now formally installed and prepared for His work; He must enter upon it at once. Mark well: the Spirit drove Him into the wilderness. It is a stronger word than that used by the other evangelists, Matt. 4, 1; Luke 4, 1. Christ was a true human being. He had some idea of the severity of the trial that awaited Him, and He very naturally hung back; the flesh was weak. But the Spirit, by gentle insistence, urged Him onward. It was a hard fight which He must undergo, but it was a part of His office. For forty days He was out there in the mountainous wilderness; for forty days He withstood the unceasing attacks of Satan, for the incidents narrated by Matthew and Luke are only outstanding features of the temptation. To destroy the works of the devil He had come into the world, 1 John 3, 8, and to destroy the works of the devil He must begin at the very outset of His official work. An impressive picture: The Son of God, according to His human nature, surrounded by the majesty of the desert hills, with no living being to keep him company but the wild beasts whose haunts He had invaded, attacked in every possible way, in every conceivable manner, by Satan, who endeavors, with all his devilish power and cunning, to hinder the work of redemption. But the Savior conquered, He routed the devil. And the Victor received the ministrations of the angels, the good spirits, who came to Him after the battle, whose service refreshed Him according to both body and soul. It was a spiritual crisis through which Jesus here passed while He resisted the temptation, both fierce and protracted. It is more than probable that the terrific strain of those days of ceaseless vigilance left Him as exhausted as in Gethsemane, when it was necessary for an angel to come and strengthen Him.

The beginning of Christ's preaching: **V. 14. Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the Gospel of the kingdom of God, v. 15. and saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent ye, and believe the Gospel.** The narrative moves forward very rapidly, since the evangelist merely sketches the early days of Christ's official work. He omits the visit to Samaria, the journey to Galilee, and the return to Judea. Jesus purposely waited with a more public demonstration of His powers until John the Baptist was no longer engaged in His preparatory labors. With John's being placed into prison his career was practically ended, though some of his disciples continued to adhere to him. Now Christ journeyed into Galilee and came forth openly with His message. This was due partly to the fact that even at this early date the Pharisees of Judea were planning to remove Him, John 4, 1, and partly to the prophecy to which Matthew refers at this point, Matt. 4, 14—16. His work, His constant occupation at this time, was preaching the Gospel of God, the good news of which God is the Author, which God had made possible, and which tells about God and His concern about the entire sinful and fallen mankind. It is the characteristic message of the New Testament. Its summary is: Fulfilled is the time, and near is come the kingdom of God; repent and believe the Gospel. In and with the coming of Jesus the time which the prophets of old always had in mind was fulfilled, Gal. 4, 4; Eph. 1, 10. For the entire Old Testament points forward to His coming. With His coming also the kingdom of God has come near. His presence, message, and work invite faith in Him, by which all men should become members of His kingdom. For "that is what it means," as Luther says, "to be in the kingdom of heaven, if I am a living member of Christianity, and not only hear the Gospel, but also believe. If this were not so, a man would be in heaven, just as though I would throw a log or block among the Christians, or as the devil is among them." 1) Repentance must necessarily precede faith; for the latter implies the acceptance of the Savior of sinners and therefore also the acknowledgment of sins committed. The sinners, those that know their sinfulness, will then be more than willing to put their trust in the Gospel, whose essence is the forgiveness of sins through the merits of Jesus Christ. It was a message of salvation and glory which Jesus was here proclaiming.

The formal call of the first disciples: **V. 16. Now as He walked by the Sea of Galilee, He saw Simon and Andrew, his brother, casting a net into the sea; for they were fishers. V. 17. And Jesus said unto them, Come ye after Me, and I will make you to become fishers of men. V. 18. And straightway they forsook their nets and followed Him. V. 19. And when He had gone a little farther thence, He saw James, the son of Zebedee, and John, his brother, who also were in the ship mending their nets. V. 20. And straightway He called them; and they left their father Zebedee in the ship with the hired servants and went after Him.** Here is an interesting feature: the prominence given to the call of Peter and his brother. Probably Peter, in the course of his Gospel-teaching, loved to dwell especially upon that fact that the Lord had seen fit to call him as one of the disciples, and thus had honored him far above his deserts. And the Holy Ghost had Mark make a note of it here to bring out all the more strongly the grace and love of Christ. It was at the Sea of Galilee, where Jesus spent a large part of the time while He

1) Luther, 11, 490.

lived in Capernaum. Jesus was walking along the shore, when He saw two fishermen, both of them sons of one Jonas, busy with the work of their calling, throwing out nets into the sea, casting about, now on the one side of their boat, then again on the other. The call of Jesus is explicit and unmistakable: Follow behind Me, be My disciples. His promise is comprehensive: I will make you to become fishers of men. He did not want to communicate to them by a single miracle, as He might have done, the spiritual gifts necessary for this calling, but He wanted to make them ready for their life-work by a gradual process of training. Fishers of men they were to become; their endeavors should be directed toward the souls of men, to bring them into the net of Christ, to make them members, if possible, of the communion of saints. This call decided both brothers at once. Without the slightest hesitation they left their nets and followed Him. Where the will and call of Jesus is evident at any time, there must be no hesitating, no consulting with flesh and blood: a cheerful, immediate following of Christ is demanded by the obedience of faith. In a similar manner Jesus, having gone a little farther on the shore, saw the two sons of Zebedee, one of whom He also had had in His company before. They were also busy with some work connected with their calling as fishermen, since they were mending nets. At the call of Jesus they proved themselves as willing as the sons of Jonas had been: they left their father in the boat with the hired assistants. They were not needed so badly at home but that they could heed the call of Jesus. So the Lord now had four men that had been pledged to be His regular disciples, and to be trained for the great work of preaching the Gospel throughout the world.

Preaching and Healing in Capernaum.

Mark 1, 21—38.

Christ's manner of teaching: V. 21. **And they went into Capernaum; and straightway on the Sabbath-day He entered into the synagog and taught.** V. 22. **And they were astonished at His doctrine; for He taught them as one that had authority, and not as the scribes.** In Capernaum Jesus had His headquarters, and here also Peter and Andrew now lived. Jesus may have called the four disciples on a Friday and arrived at Capernaum the same evening, before the prescribed Sabbath-rest began. But He lost no time in carrying on His work. On the Sabbath He went into the synagog, and, after the manner of the Jews, was given the right to address the assembly, to give them the explanation of Scriptures, which was usually given by one of the elders of the synagog, the *meamar*, or talk. The impression which He made at once was profound. Here was something utterly unlike the usual cut-and-dried droning about tradition and observance of elders' commandments. Here was a man with a message, with teaching, with a doctrine so unusual, so impressive, that the assembled members of the congregation were almost beside themselves with astonishment and wonder. The feature which at once marked His teaching was His authoritative manner of presenting the matter. He was a teacher that knew how to influence heart and mind; His applications were intelligible, and they went to the root of the matter presented by Him. There was nothing of the dead monotony of the method of the scribes here, although He employed none of the orator's schemes to enhance the effect. Luther says in explanation: "With authority, that is, His preaching was as of one that means it with all seriousness; and what He said had power and lived, as though it had hands and feet." 2)

The man with the unclean spirit: V. 23. **And there was in their synagog a man with an unclean spirit; and he cried out,** v. 24. **saying, Let us alone; what have we to do with Thee, Thou Jesus of Nazareth? Art Thou come to destroy us? I know Thee who Thou art, the Holy One of God.** V. 25. **And Jesus rebuked him, saying, Hold thy peace, and come out of him.** V. 26. **And when the unclean spirit had torn him, and cried with a loud voice, he came out of him.** V. 27. **And they were all amazed, insomuch that they questioned among themselves, saying, What thing is this? What new doctrine is this? For with authority commandeth He the unclean spirits, and they do obey Him.** V. 28. **And immediately His fame spread abroad throughout all the region round about Galilee.** By chance, as the average person would say, but as we say, by God's dispensation, there was present in the synagog, on that Sabbath morning, a man with an unclean spirit, possessed with a demon. Spiritually unclean the devil is, and the contact with him or his angels makes filthy before God. He had taken possession of the body of this man, using his members to do his bidding. It was the evil spirit that cried out at the sight of Jesus, affirming that he and Jesus of Nazareth had nothing in common, that he and all the demons belonged to a company which are and always will be at variance with the Son of God. His cry is a cry of fear, lest Christ should see meet to condemn them, to destroy them by chaining them forever in hell. He was conscious of his own spiritual uncleanness as compared with the holiness of Jesus, the Holy One of God. "In the emphatic sense, and thus, according to John 6, 69; Rev. 3, 7, the concealed designation of the Messiah. As the typical Old Testament anointed ones represented the Messiah, so the typical saints, priests, prophets, and kings, Ps. 16, represent the Holy One, in the most exclusive sense." 3) But Jesus soon

2) Quoted in *Syn. Ber., Iowa Dist.*, 1907, 18.
3) Schaff, *Commentary, Mark*, 22.

made His business known by rebuking the demon and bidding him hold his peace and come out of the man. Jesus has absolute authority over all things, over all creatures, not only in heaven and on earth, but also under the earth. He is the Master and Lord also of the evil spirits. And so this demon, forced against his evil will to obey, tried to vent his spite in one last effort to harm the body of his victim. He convulsed him, he threw him into a spasm, into a severe epileptic fit. Then, with a last great, screaming cry, he goes forth from the man. The effect of this miracle, coming immediately after the address which had made such a deep impression, was overwhelming. The people were almost stupefied with astonishment. A questioning-together, a hubbub arose in the school, which shows how deeply they were moved: Who can explain this? Has He a new revelation that enables Him to deliver men from the power of demons? Does He do this by His own authority, in His own power? For we see that He orders the unclean spirits about, and they obey Him without question. The news spread like wildfire, at once, everywhere, in the whole region of Galilee round about. Jesus had here given indisputable evidence that He was indeed the Holy One of God, who had come into the world to destroy the works of the devil and to deliver all men from the bondage of Satan.

The healing of Peter's mother-in-law: V. 29. **And forthwith, when they were come out of the synagog, they entered into the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John.** V. 30. **But Simon's wife's mother lay sick of a fever, and anon they tell Him of her.** V. 31. **And He came and took her by the hand, and lifted her up; and immediately the fever left her, and she ministered unto them.** Mark tells this story with greater attention to detail than Matthew, undoubtedly because Peter had taken note of all the things which concerned him closely. By the word "forthwith" the evangelist calls attention to the miracle. The two brothers, Simon and Andrew, as the text here expressly states, had a house in Capernaum. And to this Christ and His four disciples wended their way. Hardly had they entered the house, when they, the members of the household, especially Simon and Andrew, told him about the severe sickness of Peter's mother-in-law, who was ill with a bad fever, which is apt to sap the strength very rapidly. Jesus, in turn, lost no time in performing His work of sympathy. Going to her couch, He lifted or raised her up by taking hold of her hand. At the same time, He rebuked the fever, Luke 4, 39, and it left her at once. And her full strength was restored to her in a moment, for she was able to arise and serve them all, but especially Him, to whom she owed her recovery. Fevers and grievous diseases of all kinds are an uncanny power, their very mysteriousness often renders them baffling and fearful. But Christ is stronger than all powers of destruction.

Healing of various diseases: V. 32. **And at even, when the sun did set, they brought unto Him all that were diseased, and them that were possessed with devils.** V. 33. **And all the city was gathered together at the door.** V. 34. **And He healed many that were sick of divers diseases, and cast out many devils; and suffered not the devils to speak, because they knew Him.** Jesus had little chance for rest, once the power was known which people had witnessed in Him. The people waited indeed until the Sabbath was past, for the day came to an end with the setting of the sun. But then they brought to Him, they carried to Him all those that were in a bad way, that were not feeling well, together with such as were troubled with demons. So quickly had His fame spread that practically all the inhabitants of the city had come together and were assembled before the door of the house where He was staying. And they were not disappointed in their trust. No matter what the disease was (and many different forms of sickness were represented in that great multitude), He healed them. And many demons He cast out; by a word of command from Him they had to leave their victims and take their disagreeable presence elsewhere. Note: Christ did not permit the demons to speak, lest they tell the people the truth concerning Him. The Lord desires no testimony from the devil and from all those that are willingly in His service. He wanted to reveal Himself to the people of Galilee in His own way and at His own time.

Jesus retires for rest and strength: V. 35. **And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, He went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed.** V. 36. **And Simon and they that were with Him followed after Him.** V. 37. **And when they had found Him, they said unto Him, All men seek for Thee.** V. 38. **And He said unto them, Let us go into the next towns, that I may preach there also; for therefore came I forth.** It had been long after sundown, probably as long as twilight lasted, that Jesus had been busy with the sick people. And yet, before the dawn brightened the hills on the eastern shore of Lake Gennesaret, while it was yet night, He arose, left the house, and went out into a desert place. He had doubtless been tired the evening before. And He knew that the future would bring many such days, with excitement and labor from morning till night. He was ready for this work; that was His office for which He had come. But His purpose in seeking a lonely place so early in the morning was to enter into communion with His heavenly Father by prayer, Heb. 5, 7. 8. He needed new strength for further labors and trials, and this He sought and received through prayer. There is no better way of maintaining the spiritual

strength and serenity needed in difficult work for the Lord than by constant intercourse with the Lord in His Word and by prayer. Jesus was soon missed at home, and Peter and several others followed the way which they thought Jesus must have taken. The text implies an earnest, anxious seeking, for this is necessary at all times when Jesus is the object of the search. Having found the Master, they inform Him that all the people were even then searching for Him. To men and women anxious to hear words out of the mouth of Jesus and to see works of glory performed by Him, the early hours of the morning are not too early. But at this time Jesus was not influenced by the message of Peter. He denies the implied petition to return to Capernaum at this time. He wanted to go to other places, and asked them to go along, to village-towns, little, unfortified hamlets. For there He wanted to preach, to proclaim the Word of the Gospel. The healing was a secondary consideration; it was intended merely to confirm the Word. The people of Capernaum should now, for a season, have time and leisure to meditate upon the preaching He had done before them, in order to have the full benefit of its influence.

The Healing of a Leper. Mark 1, 39—45.

The beginning of the Galilean journey: V. 39. **And He preached in their synagogs throughout all Galilee, and cast out devils.** V. 40. **And there came a leper to Him, beseeching Him, and kneeling down to Him, and saying unto Him, If thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean.** V. 41. **And Jesus, moved with compassion, put forth His hand, and touched him, and saith unto him, I will; be thou clean.** V. 42. **And as soon as He had spoken, immediately the leprosy departed from him, and he was cleansed.** Mark relates the events of the Galilean journey very briefly. Jesus went, He carried out His intention at once, perhaps without returning to Capernaum; the anxiety to perform His work urged Him on. Throughout Galilee, not only in the towns of the hill country of Upper Galilee, but also in the less mountainous districts of Lower Galilee, He went His way. The outstanding feature of the journey was the preaching in the synagogs, which could be done all the more easily, since services were held not only on the Sabbath, but on Mondays and Thursdays as well. He came preaching, He continued proclaiming the glad tidings of salvation to all, without respite, without ceasing. "This zealous, affectionate, and persevering diligence of Christ should be copied by all His servants in the ministry: it is not less necessary now than it was then." 4) Wherever people were assembled for services, He was willing and anxious to bring them the message of salvation. It was also on this trip that a leper came to Him. Whether this leper is the same one of whom Matthew speaks, chapter 8, 2, is immaterial. Note the urgency of his behavior: He comes, he begs and pleads, he bows down on his knees before Jesus, and he puts his desire in words. His prayer is a model: If Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean. Here is humility and submission; he leaves all in the hands of Jesus; the Master must know best what is expedient and what is wholesome. Here is also the trust of faith; the man knows, he has the firm conviction that Christ has the power to heal him. To know that Christ is the great Healer for all weaknesses and maladies of body and soul, to put one's trust in Him absolutely for help, but, in the case of bodily infirmities, to leave the time, the means, and the method in His hands, that is the essence of confidence in the Lord. The prayer and the entire bearing of the man impressed Jesus very deeply. Having compassion, He extended His hand, He touched him and said: I will; become clean. That almighty word wrought the miracle, it drove away the sickness that was such a severe burden upon the poor man. Cp. Heb. 2, 17; 4, 15; Acts 4, 30. There was no interval of doubt and uncertainty, the healing was complete at once.

Christ's attempt to avoid unwelcome publicity: V. 43. **And He straitly charged him, and forthwith sent him away;** v. 44. **and saith unto him, See thou say nothing to any man; but go thy way, show thyself to the priest, and offer for thy cleansing those things which Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them.** V. 45. **But he went out, and began to publish it much, and to blaze abroad the matter, insomuch that Jesus could no more openly enter into the city, but was without in desert places; and they came to Him from every quarter.** Here is a matter which might seem strange at first glance. Speaking to the former leper in a most severe manner, assuming a threatening aspect, He thrust him away, with the injunction to tell no man about the miracle, but to follow the command of the Levitical purification strictly, Lev. 13 and 14. The bringing of his sacrifice was to be a witness, a testimony to all men, that he really had been cleansed of his leprosy. The reasons for this behavior of the Lord are evident from the entire story, in comparison with the previous text. The Word of the Gospel which He preached was the most important thing in the eyes of the Lord. People should seek Him for the sake of that Word. Publicity resulting from His healing the sick and cleansing the lepers might bring many that would care nothing for the preaching and thus hinder His Messianic labors. Then also, the Lord wanted to avoid unpleasantness, in case the priest should find out about His healing the leper before the man actually appeared to be adjudged clean. But the man, in the fulness

4) Clarke, *Commentary*, 5, 292.

of his joy, disregarded the Lord's command and, by publishing broadcast the fact of his having been healed, really added to the Lord's anxieties and labors. For now people came swarming from all sides, insomuch that Jesus could no longer go into the city, but was obliged to stay out in lonely, desert places, and even there they found Him, coming from all parts of Galilee.

Summary. *John's ministry prepared the way for the Lord, who thereupon, after His baptism and the temptation in the wilderness, entered upon His labors in Galilee, called four men to be His disciples, taught in the synagog and cast out an unclean spirit, healed Simon's mother-in-law and many other sick people, made a preaching trip through Galilee, and healed a leper.*

CHAPTER 2.

Healing the Palsied Man. Mark 2, 1—12.

The return to Capernaum: V. 1. **And again He entered into Capernaum after some days; and it was noised that He was in the house.** V. 2. **And straightway many were gathered together, insomuch that there was no room to receive them, no, not so much as about the door; and He preached the Word unto them.** Mark here omits a large part of the gospel-story which the other evangelists relate, in harmony with his purpose to stress the miracles of Jesus and set forth His divine power. Jesus had, in the mean time, completed His first journey through Galilee, and had also been to the other side of the Sea of Galilee. Some of Christ's most notable sermons, as the Sermon on the Mount, also belong into this interval. It was after some days, after quite a long while, that Jesus came again to Capernaum. As soon as He had arrived, however, this was heard; the rumor, the report of His having returned was spread. Soon the whole city knew that He was again at home. It was not long, either, before many people gathered, with the extraordinary incidents of some weeks or months ago still fresh in their memory. So eagerly they came flocking that not only was the house filled, but the space round about the door was crowded as well. Even there it was impossible to find any more room for additional visitors, much less on the inside. And He spoke unto them, not in a formal way, in a set speech, but in a more informal talk. It was the Word that He spoke, the Word of the Gospel, the Word of the Lord, that Word which alone is worthy of the name, just as at present the word "Bible," meaning "book," is used for the one and only book, whose contents place it in a class entirely by itself.

The palsied man: V. 3. **And they come unto Him, bringing one sick of the palsy, which was borne of four.** V. 4. **And when they could not come nigh unto Him for the press, they uncovered the roof where He was; and when they had broken it up, they let down the bed wherein the sick of the palsy lay.** V. 5. **When Jesus saw their faith, He said unto the sick of the palsy, Son, thy sins be forgiven thee.** While Jesus was in the house, and the conditions were such that hardly another person could be wedged in between the crowd, there came men that brought or carried a paralytic man. So severe was the sickness and so great the consequent weakness of the man that he could neither be led nor supported in an upright position. He was lying on a sofa or hammock-like couch, which was carried by four men. It was out of the question to approach Christ, to come anywhere near Him. The crowd effectually blocked the doorway. But these men were neither dismayed nor baffled. Taking their precious burden up the stairway, which, after the custom of the Jews, led from the ground on the side to the flat roof, they proceeded to uncover the roof above the spot where Jesus was standing, as nearly as they could estimate the location. Here they took off the tiles, making an opening large enough to permit the lowering of the bed with its occupant before the feet of Jesus. There must never be a lack of determination on the part of men that actually want to bring any matter to the attention of Jesus. A way can be found to make known your wants to Him, if there is the persistence of firm faith to show the way. Note: It was this that Jesus looked for as soon as the sick man was placed before Him, the faith of them all, the undoubting trust that He could and would help in this great trouble, since He was the Messiah, who had come to take away sin, with its guilt and with its curse. It should also be remembered: the intercessory groanings of the heart for the trouble of any friend or any person in the world have great power with Christ, when they flow from a heart full of faith in Him. So it proved in this case. For the first assurance of Jesus was that addressed to the sick man: Son, forgiven be thy sins. That was glorious, comforting news. For though the present sickness may not have been caused by any direct fault of the sufferer, yet it is true that sin has caused all the suffering in the world from the beginning. "For if we had remained without sin," as our church-book has it, "death could not have prevailed over us, much less any other affliction." That assurance alone, therefore, benefited the sufferer greatly, since it transmitted to him the continual forgiveness of all his sins through the merits of the Savior.

Christ's defense against the scribes: V. 6. **But there were certain of the scribes sitting there, and reasoning in their hearts,**

v. 7. **Why doth this man thus speak blasphemies? Who can forgive sins but God only?** V. 8. **And immediately when Jesus perceived in His spirit that they so reasoned within themselves, He said unto them, Why reason ye these things in your hearts?** V. 9. **Whether is it easier to say to the sick of the palsy, Thy sins be forgiven thee, or to say, Arise, and take up thy bed, and walk?** V. 10. **But that ye may know that the Son of Man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (He saith to the sick of the palsy,)** v. 11. **I say unto thee, Arise, and take up thy bed, and go thy way into thine house.** V. 12. **And immediately he arose, took up the bed, and went forth before them all, insomuch that they were all amazed, and glorified God, saying, We never saw it on this fashion.** The leaders of the Jews had watched developments in Galilee with apprehension for some time. The simple assurance of this new teacher did not meet with their approval, especially since He had not asked for their sanction. And so they had men watching Jesus all the time. In this case there was a large delegation of scribes present, Luke 5, 17. As soon as they heard the word out of the mouth of Jesus concerning forgiveness, their pharisaic suspicions were aroused, and their pharisaic condemnation followed. For fear of the multitude they dared not voice their sentiments, but in their heart they passed judgment unhesitatingly, condemning Jesus for a blasphemer. Their argument sounds reasonable: Who can forgive sins but God only? Every sin is, in the last analysis, a transgression of God's holy commandment and therefore against Him. From God, therefore, we ask forgiveness of our sins, Ps. 25, 18; 32, 5. But two points should be noted: Christ, as the Son of God, as His equal in all divine attributes, can and may forgive sins in His own power; and the announcement of forgiveness implies the redemption, and may now be made by any man. Though the objection was not spoken, yet Jesus, who searches mind and heart, Ps. 139, 2, knew their thoughts perfectly which they had concerning Him. And He replies to the challenge. He puts a question to them which is intended to show them the foolishness of their position: Which is the easier of the two, to heal the spiritual or the bodily infirmity? Matt. 9, 4. 5, to say: Thy sins be forgiven thee, or to say: Arise, and take up thy bed, and walk off? The scribes, according to their position, now should have said: The forgiving of sins is the easier, for that cannot be controlled, since its action was strictly in the spiritual plane. But Jesus does not wait for their answer. He wants to give them a practical, indubitable proof and demonstration of the power which He possesses in His position as Son of Man, in His office as the divine-human Messiah. He forgave the sins of the paralytic in His own power, by His own right and might. And He now, by a simple command, restored the sick man to perfect health and full strength, enabling him not only to get up from his couch with some unsteadiness, but to take up his couch before them all and to depart. It was such a wonderful manifestation that all those present, with the exception of the scribes, were astonished almost to stupefaction, and gave praise to God in the words: In this way we never saw it yet. This miracle and all it implied and presupposed was something new to them. It argued for a power greater than any that they had ever come into contact with.

There is much comfort in these words to this day. The Son of God became man, and by His life, Passion, and death earned perfect forgiveness for the sins of all men. The debt is not simply canceled, but is paid through the merits of Christ. For that reason God no longer has a remembrance of our sins. And therefore the Son of Man may distribute the great treasure, which He has earned, among the children of men. What is more, God has, through Christ, given to men the power on earth to forgive sins. Christ has given to all His disciples, to the entire Christian Church on earth, the peculiar power to forgive the sins of the penitent sinners unto them. Thus we know where and how we may find forgiveness of sins. "Not in heaven, as the Pharisees here suppose. . . . Guard against that and say: God has placed forgiveness of sins into Holy Baptism, into the Lord's Supper, and into the Word; yea, He has given it into the mouth of every Christian; if he consoles thee and promises thee God's grace through the merit of Christ Jesus, thou shalt receive and believe it, in no other way but as though Christ with His own mouth had given thee the promise, as here to the paralytic." 5)

The Calling of Levi and the Dinner at His House. Mark 2, 13—22.

V. 13. **And He went forth again by the seaside; and all the multitude resorted unto Him, and He taught them.** V. 14. **And as He passed by, He saw Levi, the son of Alphaeus, sitting at the receipt of custom, and said unto him, Follow Me. And he arose and followed Him.** The encounter with the scribes in no way diminishes the zeal of the Lord for the proclamation of the Gospel and for the performance of all the duties of His office. The crowd willingly fell back as He came forth, and eagerly fell in behind Him as He took His way toward the sea. And again He did His work as the great Teacher of the New Testament. As He then, in the intervals of His teaching, was walking along the great road that led from Capernaum toward the northeast, He passed by the booth of a customs collector, or, as the people were com-

5) Luther, quoted in Stoeckhardt, *Biblische Geschichte des Neuen Testaments*, 76.

monly called in Palestine, a publican. Palestine had been a province of the Roman Empire since the year 67 B. C. The Roman officers that had charge of the collection of taxes had this somewhat disagreeable task performed by others, who did it for a consideration. The lowest tax-collectors, especially those engaged in exacting duties and customs, were cordially hated by the people. Now Capernaum was situated on the main caravan road between the West and the East, between the Mediterranean Sea and the city of Damascus. Traffic on this road was very heavy, and the consequent income from tariff was large. For every animal in the caravan a tax had to be paid, and the duty on imports ranged from 2½ to 12½ per cent. There was also the disagreeable feature that a mere declaration of values was not considered sufficient. The officers personally unpacked the goods and made their calculations accordingly. No wonder the publicans were not popular, being engaged in such a disagreeable work, and for the Romans, the oppressors of the country, at that. And yet, Jesus stops at the booth of this man Levi, the son of Alphaeus, and bids the publican in charge follow Him. It is more than probable that Levi was already acquainted with Jesus, that he at least knew of Him, having been present, perhaps, at some of His sermons. At any rate, it was an effectual call. The Lord, by His Word, so influenced the heart and mind of this man, that he willingly gave up his work and became a disciple of Christ. And from this day he bore the name Matthew, in accordance with a Jewish custom, by which individuals assumed a new name upon the occasion of some critical occurrence in their lives, like Peter and Paul.

The reception and dinner: V. 15. **And it came to pass that, as Jesus sat at meat in his house, many publicans and sinners sat also together with Jesus and His disciples; for there were many, and they followed Him.** V. 16. **And when the scribes and Pharisees saw Him eat with publicans and sinners, they said unto His disciples, How is it that He eateth and drinketh with publicans and sinners?** V. 17. **When Jesus heard it, He saith unto them, They that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick: I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.** Matthew was duly elated and thankful to the Lord, as a newly converted person is apt to be. In his joy he caused an elaborate dinner to be prepared for the Lord and the disciples. Jesus willingly accepted the invitation, because it would afford Him welcome opportunity to come into contact with needy souls. While He was reclining at one of the tables, in the fashion of the Orient, many publicans and sinners crowded in and joined in the meal. They were Levi Matthew's former associates and friends, and he saw nothing strange or incongruous in their appearing at this time. But there were people that were highly indignant about this breach of Jewish custom and etiquette. For the tax-collectors and the public sinners were for them in one class, they had been put out of the congregation, out of the synagog, usually for some minor transgression against Jewish tradition. And, being properly shocked, the scribes voiced their disapproval to the disciples, either during the progress of the dinner or when they saw the disciples leave the house. They could not understand how Jesus could possibly eat at the same table with publicans and sinners. But Jesus heard their disapproving remark. He knew that His action would be an offense to these self-righteous hypocrites. And so He reminded them of a proverb which was then in general use: There is no need for the strong to have a doctor, but for the sick. That is true on the spiritual plane as well as on the physical. He that is truly well and strong, he that is perfectly righteous and without sin, truly needs no physician, no help for his sins, since he is not conscious of them and cannot be on account of their absence. Such perfect persons are indeed unknown on this earth; but all the greater is the number of them that imagine themselves to be perfect. And believing themselves to be righteous (miserable delusion!), they want nothing of the Savior of sinners, they will not believe that His mission concerns them. And so Christ confines His work to the sinners, to those that feel the weakness, the sickness of their soul, the terrible affliction of sin. By His call into communion with Him and by His dealing with them through the means of grace He gives them the assistance they need, He imputes to them, He gives them, His own righteousness, and thus makes them well in time and in eternity.

A question of fasting: V. 18. **And the disciples of John and of the Pharisees used to fast; and they come and say unto Him, Why do the disciples of John and of the Pharisees fast, but Thy disciples fast not?** V. 19. **And Jesus said unto them, Can the children of the bridechamber fast while the bridegroom is with them? As long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast.** V. 20. **But the days will come when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then shall they fast in those days.** The disciples of John, after the rigorousness of their master, were inclined to be very severe in the mortification of their flesh. They may not have done so with the belief that they were meriting much in the sight of God, but the thought of the necessity of such practises was ever present with them. The Pharisees, on the other hand, made their boast of their fasting, Matt. 6, 16; 9, 14; Luke 18, 12. They took a great measure of pride in the fact that they were exceeding the commandment of God in this respect. In addition, they expected others to follow their lead. At this particular time they were fasting. And in carrying out

the demands of their self-appointed sanctity, they were kept busy in straightening out the conduct of others instead of attending to their own affairs. They wanted Christ above all to regulate His piety by theirs. And, in doing so, they wanted to hold themselves up as models in order to shine before the people with their holiness. In this case either the Pharisees, together with the disciples of John, or men that were acting as their representatives, came to Christ. They want to know why the custom of the Pharisees and John's disciples is not followed in the immediate neighborhood of Christ. They speak of the disciples of Christ, but their criticism is directed against Him. The explanation of the Lord is simple. He is the Bridegroom, in whose company the children of the bridechamber, the best man and his companions, are at the present time, so long as He is in the world. Now they were surely aware of the fact that fasting was commonly looked upon as a sign of bereavement, sorrow, and repentance. It surely would not be right and proper for the disciples, therefore, since they were in the midst of the joys of the marriage-feast, to assume doleful faces as though they had suffered a great and bitter bereavement. That time, indeed, was coming, when the Bridegroom would be taken out of their midst, then they would have reason for showing every manifestation of grief, John 16, 20.

Two parables to emphasize His meaning: V. 21. **No man also seweth a piece of new cloth on an old garment; else the new piece that filled it up taketh away from the old, and the rent is made worse.** V. 22. **And no man putteth new wine into old bottles; else the new wine doth burst the bottles, and the wine is spilled, and the bottles will be marred; but new wine must be put into new bottles.** Here a matter of common experience is applied to the case in hand. To sew a patch of new cloth upon an old garment is not only incongruous, but usually aggravates the trouble and causes a further tear at the seam. And to put new wine, grape-juice that is in the process of fermentation, into old wine-skins, may easily become disastrous, since the skin is no longer strong enough to withstand the process going on inside. The old, dead orthodoxy of the Pharisees, their righteousness of works, did not fit with the doctrine of Jesus of the free mercy of God in and through Christ Jesus. He that trusts in his works and then intends to patch this up with a few scraps of the Gospel, he that wants to cover up some vice with Christ's merit, will soon find out that his is a poor comfort. In his heart he is still adhering to the old religion of works, which will drag him down to perdition. And the new wine of the Gospel of the forgiveness of sins for Christ's sake does not suit the hearts that are still bound up in self-righteousness. If the sweet Gospel of God's grace is preached to proud, self-righteous hearts, it will surely be wasted, for they cannot and will not accept and believe it, and it is a mystery to them how other people can take delight in that old Gospel of free grace. But where the hearts have been renewed, made entirely new by the power of the Word, there the Gospel will find the reception which it ought to have, there the hearts accept the glorious news of their redemption and are prepared for life eternal.

The Lord of the Sabbath. Mark 2, 23—28.

V. 23. **And it came to pass that He went through the corn-fields on the Sabbath-day; and His disciples began, as they went, to pluck the ears of corn.** V. 24. **And the Pharisees said unto Him, Behold, why do they on the Sabbath-day that which is not lawful?** V. 25. **And He said unto them, Have ye never read what David did when he had need, and was an hungred, he, and they that were with him,** v. 26. **how he went into the house of God in the days of Abiathar, the high priest, and did eat the showbread, which is not lawful to eat but for the priests, and gave also to them which were with him?** V. 27. **And He said unto them, The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath;** v. 28. **therefore the Son of Man is Lord also of the Sabbath.** The Pharisees did not abate their jealous, hawklike watch over Jesus and His disciples for one minute. And the Lord, on His part, in no way attempted to escape from them. The lessons which He wished to convey to them would be brought out all the sooner with their vigilant presence ever near. Jesus and His disciples, on a Sabbath, were taking a walk through the fields of grain, which were just about ready for harvest. There were in those days simple, rough footpaths that have existed in Palestine since time immemorial. "If a landowner wished to raise grain in a field through which one of these paths ran, he plowed up to the very edge of the narrow path and put in his seed." 6) It was along one of these paths that the little company of Jesus was strolling, they were making their way slowly. And where the grain had encroached upon the path, the disciples, being hungry, pulled up the stalks. This they continued, as they went, and then rubbed the ears between the hands to extract the kernels, which they ate. Here the Pharisees complained to the Lord about the disciples, although their accusation implied a criticism of the Master for permitting the pulling of the stalks, which they identified with reaping, and the rubbing of the ears, which they identified with threshing. But Jesus defended His disciples by referring the Pharisees to the example of David, who, in a similar situation, when he and his men were in need, did not hesitate to take the showbread out of the hands of Abiathar, the high priest,

6) Barton, *Archeology and the Bible*, 132.

and to distribute the cakes among his men, 1 Sam. 21, 6. Ordinarily, only the priests were permitted to eat this bread, Lev. 24, 8. 9, but in a case of necessity, above all, love is the fulfilment of the Law, and no one ever thought of censuring David for his action. Note: Either Ahimelech bore the additional name Abiathar, or father and son officiated together at Nobe, in this manner that David received the showbread from Ahimelech with the distinct sanction of Abiathar. The conclusion which Jesus draws from this story is brief and to the point: The Sabbath is given to man, and not man to the Sabbath. The Sabbath, as God intended it for the Jews, was to serve them as a day of rest, but His intention never had been to make them slaves of its observance and to bind them with fetters that would render life unpleasant for them. The Sabbath is thus only a means to an end. And so far as the whole question is concerned, this truth stands for all times. Jesus, as the Son of Man, as the divine-human Lord of all, has the right to abrogate the Old Testament Sabbath if He so chooses. The old injunctions concerning sacrifices, new moons, Sabbaths, etc., were in force till He came. But the body itself is of Christ, Col. 2, 16. 17. The Third Commandment enjoins only so much upon the Christians that they gladly hear and learn the Word of God. He that does this much keeps the Third Commandment in the sense of the New Testament and need not be worried by the Sabbath fanatics of these latter days.[7])

Summary. *Jesus heals a paralytic, calls the publican Levi to be His disciple, gives a short discourse concerning fasting and the difference between the old and the new dispensation, and declares Himself to be the Lord of the Sabbath.*

7) Luther, 12, 1970.

CHAPTER 3.

Healing the Withered Hand. Mark 3, 1—6.

V. 1. **And He entered again into the synagog; and there was a man there which had a withered hand.** V. 2. **And they watched Him, whether He would heal him on the Sabbath-day, that they might accuse Him.** V. 3. **And He saith unto the man which had the withered hand, Stand forth.** Again He entered, or, as Luke relates, more exactly, on another Sabbath, Luke 6, 6, on the Sabbath following this one on which He had shown the real meaning of Sabbath and Sabbath-rest. Into a synagog He went, whether into that of Capernaum or elsewhere, is of no consequence here. But He had a purpose, an object, in mind. For there, in the synagog, as one of the worshiping congregation, was a man that had the hand, the right hand, withered, as the result of injury by accident or disease. He was deprived entirely of its use. It seems that the man was not here by chance, but had been induced to come by the enemies of Christ, for they were watching very closely whether Jesus would on the Sabbath heal him. Note: Jesus does not permit the apparent hatred of the Pharisees and scribes to keep Him from attending the services of the synagog after His custom; He went for His own edification. Also, the Pharisees felt that the difference between the teaching of Christ and their own dead traditions was an essential difference, that they would have to change their entire mode of speaking and living if there were to be harmony between them and this new Teacher; and this they refused to do. They had even now determined to find some way of silencing or removing this objectionable speaker of truth. The purpose of their watchfulness in this case was to find some accusation against Him before the government, if possible, before the Church at any rate. Jesus knew their thoughts, even before they spoke them, Matt. 12, 10. His course of action He had determined on at once. The lesson He wanted to teach at this time was to be an impressive one. For that reason He said to the man with the withered hand: Arise toward the center. He wanted him to be standing in the middle, before the entire congregation, as a fitting object of demonstration.

The healing: V. 4. **And He saith unto them, Is it lawful to do good on the Sabbath-days, or to do evil? to save life, or to kill? But they held their peace.** V. 5. **And when He had looked round about them with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts, He saith unto the man, Stretch forth thine hand. And he stretched it out; and his hand was restored whole as the other.** V. 6. **And the Pharisees went forth, and straightway took counsel with the Herodians against Him how they might destroy Him.** Jesus acted with the greatest patience and kindness. He tried to win His enemies by actual persuasion, by causing them to see the correctness of His position. His question to them is: Is it the right and proper thing, ought people to feel this as their obligation, to do good, to save life, to be of assistance to one's neighbor on the Sabbath? Or can it be possible that any one should want to advocate the doing of evil, the destroying of life, on that day? The omission of a good deed, the neglect of some act of kindness, is, in fact, equal to actual murder in a case where the personal well-being of the neighbor is concerned. The conscience of every man will tell him that on the Sabbath, as well as on any other day, deeds of mercy are not only permitted, but very distinctly commanded. We

should help and befriend our neighbor in every bodily need. But the Pharisees here deliberately hardened their hearts. Just because their conscience condemned them before this Teacher, they determined not to give Him the satisfaction of yielding. And so they stubbornly refused to answer. Jesus waited. But when their purpose became increasingly evident, He let His stern gaze wander around in the circle, from one to the other. He was filled with righteous indignation over such unreasonable stubbornness. And, incidentally, He was deeply grieved over the obduracy, the callousness, the blindness of their hearts. Note: The anger of Jesus is always directed against the transgression, against the sin; for the sinners the Lord has only the feeling of deepest sorrow and sympathy. "By a long resistance to the grace and Spirit of God, their hearts had become callous; they were past feeling. By a long opposition to the light of God, they became dark in their understanding, were blinded by the deceitfulness of sin, and thus were past seeing. By a long continuance in the practise of every evil work, they were cut off from all union with God, the Fountain of spiritual life; and, becoming dead in trespasses and sins, they were incapable of any resurrection but through a miraculous power of God." 8) Christ's decision therefore was swiftly carried out. He bade the man stretch forth his hand. And the man obeyed, and his hand was restored to perfect health, so that he could now use it as before. This result of their little scheme angered the Pharisees beyond all semblance of reasonableness. They had enough. Without waiting for further teaching, they left the synagog. Their minds as to their course were made up. It remained only to find ways and means to carry out their design. It was not so much the fact that their orthodox Sabbath-keeping had received a severe jolt and that, in their opinion, the Sabbath had been broken by the performance of the miracle of healing, but that the miracle brought fame to Jesus, and that they had been unable to answer His simple question without making their own position untenable. It was, then, in brief, nothing but vengeful spite that moved them. And they sought allies and chose the Herodians. This society, with its peculiar ideas regarding the Messianic calling of the family of Herod (cp. Matt. 22, 16), might easily be influenced against Christ, if the Pharisees would but point out the growing influence of Jesus over the common people, who might soon be ready to hail Him as the promised Messiah. So these two parties, otherwise not the best of friends, readily agreed in counsel against Jesus, how they might destroy Him. So far hypocrisy and the semblance of piety may drive people that they try to cover the most obvious lack of love and mercy, yea, even mortal hatred and enmity, with pious usages and practises.

8) Clarke, *Commentary*, 5, 296.

Miracles by the Seaside. Mark 3, 7—21.

The withdrawal of Jesus: V. 7. **But Jesus withdrew Himself with His disciples to the sea; and a great multitude from Galilee followed Him, and from Judea, v. 8. and from Jerusalem, and from Idumea, and from beyond Jordan; and they about Tyre and Sidon, a great multitude, when they heard what great things He did, came unto Him.** Jesus made use of discretion and prudence. He knew the plans of the Pharisees, and therefore He withdrew from their wiles and persecutions and attacks. With His disciples He went down to the sea; these men are now mentioned as important adherents of Christ, which they were destined to become more and more as time passed. The shore of the lake was Christ's place of retreat; from there He could any time easily remove still farther. And the opposition of the Pharisees had resulted in increasing the prestige of Christ in a manner which they had not anticipated, for now a great multitude, an immense crowd, as the evangelist notes twice, gathered from all sides. There were people from Galilee, the northern part of Palestine, where Jesus was then carrying on the work of His ministry. There were people from exclusive Judea that followed Him. Even haughty Jerusalem was represented, as well as Idumea, the country of the Edomites south and west of the Dead Sea, and Perea, the country on the east side of the Jordan, and the country about Tyre and Sidon, in Phenicia. It was a revival movement which affected the entire country. There was hardly a person of average intelligence in all Palestine and in the surrounding countries that had not heard about the great Prophet and His preaching and healing in Galilee. The fame of His great deeds was still spreading, and the people, in consequence, were flocking to Him.

Miracles of healing: V. 9. **And He spake to His disciples that a small ship should wait on Him because of the multitude, lest they should throng Him.** V. 10. **For He had healed many, insomuch that they pressed upon Him for to touch Him, as many as had plagues.** V. 11. **And unclean spirits, when they saw Him, fell down before Him and cried, saying, Thou art the Son of God.** V. 12. **And He straitly charged them that they should not make Him known.** So great were the crowds that came to the seaside to see Jesus that He was obliged to take precautions. He gave His disciples instructions that they should have a small boat ready at all times, with the oars, sails, and the necessary provisions in place, that He might use it at once, should necessity so demand. This was rendered unavoidable by the mass of people, for they rushed upon Him in their impetuousness and might have borne Him down. At the same time, His Savior's love urged Him to perform many miracles of healing, as they pressed upon Him, if only to touch

Him. And the Lord permitted it in many cases that the mere touching of His garment or of His person brought healing, for they must realize that the power lay not in the clothing, but in the man. The word here used for sicknesses is very expressive, "scourge." Diseases are therefore scourges of God, either in the form of a punishment, or in the form of a merciful chastening, inflicted by God or permitted by Him for the purpose of drawing men nearer to Him. And one of the worst scourges was the possession by demons, for also such poor unfortunate people as were afflicted with this terrible ailment were brought to the Lord. Invariably these people, when they caught sight of Him, or when they had looked at Him closely, fell down before Him at the urging of the demon in them, who must needs recognize in Christ the Lord of all, and cried out a confession of His divinity: Thou art the Son of God. But that was not the confession that the Savior sought; He wants no praise out of the mouth of Satan and his angels. He did not want to be revealed, did not want to be made known by them as the Messiah. Testimony from the enemies may have its value, but Jesus wanted the people to accept His Word and come to the knowledge of Him as the promised Redeemer through His Gospel.

The call of the Twelve: V. 13. **And He goeth up into a mountain, and calleth unto Him whom He would; and they came unto Him.** V. 14. **And He ordained twelve that they should be with Him, and that He might send them forth to preach,** v. 15. **and to have power to heal sicknesses, and to cast out devils.** V. 16. **And Simon He surnamed Peter;** v. 17. **and James, the son of Zebedee, and John, the brother of James; and He surnamed them Boanerges, which is, The Sons of Thunder;** v. 18. **and Andrew, and Philip, and Bartholomew, and Matthew, and Thomas, and James, the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus, and Simon the Canaanite,** v. 19. **and Judas Iscariot, which also betrayed Him. And they went into an house.** In the neighborhood of the sea, where Jesus had been performing the miracles, there was a mountain, later simply known among the apostles by this name, in a lonely region. Jesus managed to dismiss the multitudes for a time, since He was anxious to perform a very necessary piece of work, namely, the gaining of assistants and successors in His prophetic labors. On this hill they would be undisturbed, and He would have leisure to give them the information concerning the call given them at this time. He called to Him those whom He wanted; He made a deliberate selection or choice from the total number of those that had gathered about Him as His disciples. And as He told them off, they came to Him in a place apart from the others. He then literally made twelve apostles, constituting these as a body for themselves. A special ceremony of ordination is not mentioned. It was merely a calling, a separating for special work, that the Lord performed. But as "the Twelve" they were henceforth known. The Lord's charge to them consisted mainly in these points: That they should be with Him, be in His neighborhood at all times, this constant attendance upon His words being necessary for their training; that they should be sent out by Him for the work of heralding or proclaiming the Gospel; that they should, for this purpose, have power, transmitted to them by Jesus, to cast out demons. The power to perform miracles of such an extraordinary kind was necessary to substantiate their claim of a divine mission. The Twelve were thus called, and they received their charge, their appointment. And their names are recorded in order. Jesus surnamed, laid upon, Simon the name Peter, Matt. 16, 18. His nature was uncertain and vacillating, as his denial shows; but by the teaching of Jesus and through His mercy he was afterward strengthened in faith and in trust to become a true rock-man. James was the elder son of Zebedee, the fisherman, the name of the younger son being John. To these the Lord applied the Aramaic name Boanerges, "sons of thunder," on account of their fiery temper in their younger days, Luke 9, 54. 55. Their zeal was later tempered by the Lord's instruction. James became the first martyr of the apostles, and John was known as the "Apostle of Love." These three are mentioned first, because they were the intimate friends of the Lord, being with Him both on the Mount of Transfiguration and also in Gethsemane, not to speak of minor occasions. Andrew was the brother of Peter and one of the first to follow the Lord, John 1, 35—40. A third pair of brothers was Philip of Bethsaida and Bartholomew, who is undoubtedly identical with Nathanael, John 1, 45. 46. Matthew was formerly known as Levi, the publican, the son of Alphaeus, Matt. 10, 3. Thomas was also known as Didymus, the "twin," John 20, 24. Then there was James, the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus, also known as Lebbaeus or Judas Lebbaeus, Acts 1, 13, and Simon of Cana. Last of all is mentioned Judas, the traitor, who was from Kerioth, and was admitted to the rank of the apostles that the Scriptures might be fulfilled, John 13, 18. Their preliminary charge having been made to them, the Twelve returned to the valley with Jesus, and entered into a house. They were all in need of rest and recreation, the last days having been very strenuous.

The friends of Jesus think Him out of His senses: V. 20. **And the multitude cometh together again, so that they could not so much as eat bread.** V. 21. **And when His friends heard of it, they went out to lay hold on Him; for they said, He is beside Himself.** No sooner had Jesus returned to the city and to the house, no sooner had He come home, than a crowd again assembled. So urgent

were they in their demand to see Him that Christ and His disciples were not even given time to partake of the necessary food needed to sustain life. If the eagerness of these people had only been for the Bread of Life, if they had only been hungering and thirsting after righteousness, there would not be a discordant element in the entire story. But their object was more than ever a glimpse of the great Healer and Benefactor; His message interested them little or not at all. In the mean time those nearest to the Lord, His relatives, His mother and His brothers, who are mentioned also at the end of the chapter, were becoming worried about Him. They had heard about the multitudes and their intense insistence upon seeing Jesus and giving Him no rest. So they set out from where they were with the purpose of taking Him under their care; for they had gained the impression, and no longer made any effort to conceal it, that He was in an unhealthy state of excitement, due to overwork, bordering on insanity. This peculiar idea, which was not at all flattering to the Lord, was due to lack of proper knowledge as to His power. Jesus was the Son of God, and He might become tired and weak, but He would not submit to the extent as was supposed by His relatives.

Discourse on the Casting Out of Devils.

Mark 3, 22—35.

The pharisaic theory and the defense of Jesus: V. 22. **And the scribes which came down from Jerusalem said, He hath Beelzebub, and by the prince of the devils casteth He out devils.** V. 23. **And He called them unto Him, and said unto them in parables, How can Satan cast out Satan?** V. 24. **And if a kingdom be divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand.** V. 25. **And if a house be divided against itself, that house cannot stand.** V. 26. **And if Satan rise up against himself, and be divided, he cannot stand, but hath an end.** V. 27. **No man can enter into a strong man's house and spoil his goods except he will first bind the strong man; and then he will spoil his house.** The work of Jesus had been characterized especially by the healing of demoniacs, a cure both difficult and pronounced. It was for this reason that the enemies of Jesus took occasion to attack above all these signs of healing. The scribes from Jerusalem they were, both Pharisees and elders, since it became evident that the local rabbis could not cope with the situation. They literally came down from the capital city, for Jerusalem is situated at an elevation of 2,800 feet, while the Sea of Galilee is 620 feet below the level of the Mediterranean. The leaders of the Jewish Church were deeply troubled over the fact that this unknown rabbi, who had received neither His instruction nor the sanction for His teaching from them, should have such marvelous success; hence the delegation. An expressive and comprehensive term: they said. They made it their business, continually, and whereever an opportunity presented itself, to influence the people against Jesus. And their most malignant slander was this: He has Beelzebub, or Beelzebul; this prince of the devils gives Him the power to cast out demons. Beelzebub was the name of the patron idol of Ekron, a city of the Philistines. It meant "the god of flies"; but the Israelites changed one consonant, and had it read Beelzebul, "the god of dung," to ridicule the false god. In this way the word gradually came to designate the devil. The intention is plain. The meaning is: If this man were not in league with the devil, if He did not possess His power by authority and gift of the devil, the demons would not obey Him in going forth from the demoniacs. But Jesus has an answer ready to confound them. Knowing their thoughts, He assumes the offensive. He cites them to appear before Him and proposes to them a number of questions. Is it reasonable to suppose that Satan would cast out Satan? Would he be so foolish as to destroy his own kingdom by permitting divisions in the midst of his own armies? Would he permit the members of his own household to be at loggerheads with each other? Satan is far too keen and too prudent to bring harm upon himself and to destroy his own kingdom, for he knows that such a proceeding would signify and foretell the end of his reign. In a positive form, the defense of Christ was: Not by Beelzebub, but by the Spirit of God, I cast out devils. And this Spirit of God that spoke through Him and manifested Himself through Him, bore witness to the heart and minds also of the Pharisees. And yet they blasphemed and exhibited the poison of their heart by labeling the work of God as the work of the devil and hindering the spread of the Gospel. Similar blasphemies occur in the very midst of the so-called Christian Church to this day. The doctrine of Christ, the way of salvation as taught by Him, is blasphemed as a dangerous, harmful doctrine, and those that adhere to it in simple faith are adjudged undesirable neighbors and citizens. But the word of Jesus at this point may still be applied.

Over against the slanderous, blasphemous explanation of the Jews, Jesus now places His simple and true explanation. The devil is strong and mighty, indeed, but in Christ he has found more than his match, he has met Him whom he must acknowledge, without question, as his Master. Christ, the Son of God, has entered into the house of the strong one, Satan; He has taken with Him the spoil which fell to His lot at the time of His great victory. The demons, all the evil angels, had to confess Him and bow before Him as the Son of God; they were obliged to obey, even against their will, for all things have been put under His feet, Eph. 1, 22. By His life, Passion, and death, by His active and passive obedience to His heavenly

Father's will Christ has conquered the devil and delivered all men from his power. Thus it is that Christ can now seize the spoils taken from Satan, tear from him his possessions, also those poor people whom he has possessed. This our Lord does even to-day through the Word, by which the souls of men are delivered from the power of the devil.

A warning against the unforgivable sin: V. 28. **Verily I say unto you, All sins shall be forgiven unto the sons of men, and blasphemies wherewith soever they shall blaspheme;** v. 29. **but he that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation:** v. 30. **because they said, He hath an unclean spirit.** With solemn emphasis Jesus gives the Pharisees this warning. Jesus knew that the scribes did not believe their own theory as to His ability to cast out devils. "You are not merely mistaken theorists, you are men in a very perilous moral condition. Beware!" 9) God's mercy is as wide as heaven and earth; His forgiveness actually embraces all sins, even the ordinary blasphemies, wherewith so many people continually offend against Him. But there is one great exception, namely, when the blasphemy is directed against the Holy Ghost. This sin is unpardonable, its guilt lasts forever, it has no forgiveness forever. He that commits it is guilty of a transgression whose consequences will last throughout eternity. This solemn and complete declaration was called forth by the charge of the Jews that Jesus had an unclean spirit. Thus the blasphemy was directed against the Spirit of God that lived in Christ, and hence His warning. If the scribes had been ignorant, or if they had misunderstood the Lord and had been seeking some explanation of His strange power over demons, that would have been a sin against the Son of Man, and therefore pardonable. But they spoke against better knowledge; their charge was a deliberate, malicious blasphemy, and therefore their charge cast mockery upon the Holy Ghost.

The true relatives of the Lord: V. 31. **There came then His brethren and His mother, and, standing without, sent unto Him, calling Him.** V. 32. **And the multitude sat about Him, and they said unto Him, Behold, Thy mother and Thy brethren without seek for Thee.** V. 33. **And He answered them, saying, Who is My mother, or My brethren?** V. 34. **And He looked round about on them which sat about Him, and said, Behold My mother and My brethren!** V. 35. **For whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is My brother, and My sister, and mother.** Jesus had barely finished His discourse directed to the Pharisees, when there came an interruption. We were told that His kinsmen had gotten ready to save Him against the probable loss of His reason, v. 21. They had, in the mean time, reached the house where Jesus was sitting with His disciples, the people, and the scribes. They sent a message to Him, calling Him. They believed that the demands of relationship superseded all other considerations. They had made up their mind to take Him away for a while. The message was gradually transmitted to the Lord while He was still sitting there in the midst of His hearers, for the people sat round about Him, willing enough, for once, to listen to His preaching. But when Jesus received the message, telling that His mother and His brothers (stepbrothers, half-brothers, or cousins) were anxiously looking for Him and wanted Him outside, He gave a characteristic answer. Slowly letting His gaze travel round about in the circle, where His twelve disciples were sitting in the first row, and many others that had learned to believe on Him as near as possible, He called these men (and women) His mother and His brethren, His true relatives. Not that Christ intended to disparage the claims of relationship. He Himself was a model in the obedience and respect toward His mother, Luke 2, 51. 52; John 19, 27. But He wanted no unwarranted interference with His work and office. He desired to repudiate, first of all, the assumption as though He were not quite master of Himself and His actions. And He wanted them to understand, now and always, that the claims of earthly relationship did not dare to interfere with the business in hand, that of carrying out His ministry for the salvation of mankind. Under certain circumstances, it may happen even now, does happen, in fact, very frequently, that a man's enemies are those of his own household, chapter 7, 11—13; Matt. 10, 36. But the will of God may require that the relationship of blood, even the nearest and dearest relationship be denied in fufilling His will. It may often take a great deal of spiritual knowledge and prudence, and at other times it may require an extraordinary amount of courage and determination, but the will of God in the government and work of His Church must be the paramount issue in all instances. There can be no divided allegiance in this case, Prov. 23, 26; Matt. 10, 37.

Summary. *Jesus heals the man with a withered hand, performs miracles by the seaside, calls the twelve apostles, gives a discourse on the casting out of devils, and teaches wherein true relationship with Him consists.*

9) *Expositor's Greek Testament*, 1, 362.

THE SIN AGAINST THE HOLY GHOST.

It is a solemn and impressive warning which Jesus gave to the Pharisees upon the occasion of their blasphemy and one well worth heeding even in our days, perhaps with greater force than ever. There is so much levity, so much frivolity at the present time that people refuse to give heed to the seriousness of their eternal welfare and foolishly squander the time of grace.

It must be remembered, first of all, that God wants all men to be saved, 1 Tim. 2, 4. The whole world is included in His plan of redemption, John 3, 16. And God makes an effort to have people, all men, to come to the knowledge of the truth, Matt. 28, 20. But what is the result?

Some there are that trifle away frivolously the time of grace given them in this world, Matt. 24, 37. 38. Some there are that refuse to give heed to the invitation of the Gospel, Matt. 23, 37. Some there are that hear the Gospel, perhaps even grow up in the midst of the Christian Church, but never let the knowledge of Christ the Savior enter into their hearts. To them the Gospel is the savor of death unto death, 2 Cor. 2, 16. Others go farther than that, stubbornly resisting every effort of the Spirit to enter into their hearts and begin the work of regeneration, consistently following their own evil will, not permitting the good and gracious will of God to be carried into effect in their case. They harden their hearts, as Scripture says, 1 Sam. 6, 6; Ezek. 2, 4; Hos. 13, 8; Matt. 13, 15; Rom. 2, 5. And here the judgment of God may come upon them. Since they have hardened their hearts against His good and gracious will, He now proceeds to continue the judgment which they have begun upon themselves, John 12, 40; Rom. 9, 18; Heb. 3, 8. 13.

This hardening of the hearts is closely related to the sin against the Holy Ghost. It may be called a species of that sin. This sin is spoken of plainly in several passages of the Bible, Matt. 12, 30—32; Mark 3, 28—30; Luke 12, 10; 1 John 5, 16; Heb. 6, 4—8. From these passages the following description may be deduced. The sin is committed, not against the person, but against the work of the Holy Ghost, which consists in calling sinners to Christ and giving them the assurance of their salvation. Not the mere blasphemous thoughts, but the actual speaking, the open mockery of the work of the Holy Ghost, is condemned in these passages. If the work of the Holy Ghost is believed to be, and is openly declared to be, the work of Satan, then the blasphemy is directed against the Spirit. Such blasphemy is uttered in full consciousness and with the most perfect comprehension of the import of the blasphemy; the blasphemer glories in his blasphemy. People that are guilty of this sin were once enlightened and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good Word of God and the powers of the world to come, Heb. 6, 4. 5. By the very nature of the sin, repentance is excluded. Man having gotten into this condition of continual blasphemy by his own fault, repudiates all attempts of God to influence Him for good. The soil of his heart has become cursed, and will bear nothing but thorns. The sin against the Holy Ghost is therefore one which cannot be acknowledged; a confession of sin and a desire for forgiveness is excluded by its nature.

The following points, therefore, should be kept in mind always. The person that commits the sin against the Holy Ghost must either have been converted, or must at least have had the opportunity of feeling the influence of the Holy Ghost upon his heart. It is essential that the truth be rejected, whose soundness and sacredness the sinner cannot deny. The person living in this sin will continue in his stubborn resistance, with blasphemous, outspoken mockery of the work of the Holy Ghost, until the end. The sin is not unpardonable on account of its greatness, but on account of its nature of rejecting all pardon. No one has committed the sin that still seeks repentance. And finally, we cannot be sure until after a person's death whether he has committed the sin against the Holy Ghost, and even then it is best to keep the judgment in abeyance.10)

10) Stoeckhardt, *Biblische Geschichte des Neuen Testaments*, 59; Walther, *Gesetz und Evangelium*, 380—389; Luther, 10, 1198—1209.

CHAPTER 4.

Teaching by Means of Parables.

Mark 4, 1—34.

V. 1. **And He began again to teach by the seaside; and there was gathered unto Him a great multitude, so that He entered into a ship and sat in the sea; and the whole multitude was by the sea on the land.** V. 2. **And He taught them many things by parables, and said unto them in His doctrine.** Jesus had devoted some time to the private instruction of His disciples, in which He had been interrupted by the dispute with the Pharisees. He now resumed His ministry to the people of Galilee and the others that had come from other parts of Palestine. We have here one of the two chapters in Mark that present a connected discourse of the Lord, chapter 13 being the other. Christ's teaching was, for the most part, done in the open air, at various points along the shore of the sea. Greater crowds than ever assembled about Him, making it necessary for Him to enter into a boat and address the people while seated out there, at some distance from the land. The entire multitude, meanwhile, stood or sat along the shore, which arose from the sea in a gentle slope. Jesus thus had the advantage of having His entire audience before Him so that He could see practically every one of them, and it was much easier for Him to address them with uplifted head, since the voice carries better. And the people, in turn, were all able to see Him, a condition which is almost a prerequisite for close attention. Mark emphasizes the fact that the Lord's address was teaching, instructing. His purpose was not to keep the crowd amused, but to impart to them the knowledge pertaining to their salvation. This must be the aim of all true Gospel-preaching. The preacher that degrades His church into an amusement-hall and

His sermon into a mountebank's foolishness, does not follow in the footsteps of the great Teacher. The feature of Christ's teaching was His speaking in parables, in the simple telling of incidents taken from every-day life, but with a profound application to spiritual matters. Note: There was never the least of the frivolous or profane in the stories as told by the Lord. His was not the cheap art of the professional exhorter; the matter with which He dealt was far too serious to permit of unseemly levity.

The parable of the fourfold soil: V. 3. **Hearken! Behold, there went out a sower to sow;** v. 4. **and it came to pass, as he sowed, some fell by the wayside, and the fowls of the air came and devoured it up.** V. 5. **And some fell on stony ground, where it had not much earth; and immediately it sprang up because it had no depth of earth;** v. 6. **but when the sun was up, it was scorched; and because it had no root, it withered away.** V. 7. **And some fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked it, and it yielded no fruit.** V. 8. **And other fell on good ground, and did yield fruit that sprang up and increased; and brought forth, some thirty, and some sixty, and some an hundred.** V. 9. **And He said unto them, He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.** Jesus calls attention to His words, He wants all hearers to listen very closely, in order not to miss one word of His discourse. For His are not the words of a mere man that often uses words without meaning and connection, but every word is here fraught with heavenly wisdom. This is true of the entire Gospel. Men are inclined to discard the verbal inspiration of the Bible, saying that it is not necessary for a proper understanding of the spiritual truths, and especially of social Christianity. But Christ's ideas in this case, as often, do not agree with the wisdom of this world. Upon a single word, yea, upon a single letter, as Luther says, more depends than on all creation. The parable itself Jesus now introduces with "Behold!" He places, paints a picture before their eyes, one with which they all were familiar. But He wants them to note every detail, for there is a lesson for them there. A farmer at seed-time goes out to sow his seed, broadcast. The farm-land of the Jews was not divided into sections, but lay for the most part in irregular parcels, and the paths to the various villages and cities, which had been made ages ago, were left just as the present owners had found them. The soil was prepared up to the path on either side, but the path itself remained. And so it could very easily happen that some of the seed fell on the path, all along the way where the people went to and fro. No harrow covered it, nor could it sink into soft soil. And so the birds used it as food. In another part of the field there was a mere veneer of soil over the rock beneath. The seed which fell there could not sink in very deeply before sprouting. The warmth retained in the rock and the moisture of the night all combined in causing it to germinate very rapidly. In a very short time the young plants showed above the ground. But their tiny rootlets which enabled them to rise above the ground were not large and strong enough to supply a more mature plant, and there was no room for them to spread out and grow into deeper soil. The little moisture was soon used up, and when the sun began to beat down upon the unsheltered plot, they drooped, and presently their lack of a sufficient root system had its effect: they died. In still another part of the field the ground had either not been worked well enough to grub out all the thorns and weeds, or some weed-seed had remained from the previous year and welcomed the working of the soil as an opportunity for rank growth. The seed which fell here sprouted, and the plant started to grow, but the weeds had greater vitality, they grew up rank and strong and soon caused the grain to suffocate, so that it could produce no fruit. But still other seed fell on soil that repaid the farmer's work most handsomely: The stems grew up high and strong, the ears of grain were formed long and full, the grain filled the ears in the proper manner, and the harvest proved to be all that the husbandman could desire, for the yield was thirty-, sixty-, and a hundredfold. Again, the Lord emphasized the importance of the lesson which He wished to convey to His hearers by calling out: Whosoever has ears to hear, let him hear. The mere possession of physical ears and the mere outward hearing of the words of Christ's discourse are not sufficient. There are thousands of people that hear the Word in that way and have no benefit from it whatsoever. Christ here calls for a hearing and understanding of the heart, that the real meaning of His words be comprehended and the proper application made by every individual.

The disciples ask for an explanation: V. 10. **And when He was alone, they that were about Him with the Twelve asked of Him the parable.** V. 11. **And He said unto them, Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God; but unto them that are without, all these things are done in parables:** v. 12. **that seeing they may see, and not perceive; and hearing they may hear, and not understand; lest at any time they should be converted, and their sins should be forgiven them.** V. 13. **And He said unto them, Know ye not this parable? and how, then, will ye know all parables?** The disciples of the Lord, the Twelve as well as the others that believed on Him and were with Him as much as possible, were still very dense in spiritual understanding. So they took the opportunity, when they were alone with the Lord, to ask Him about the meaning of this parable. He said to them: To

you the mystery of the kingdom of God is given. The word "mystery" here, according to New Testament usage, does not mean something hidden and obscure, but something that is and should be revealed. "We usually think of a mystery as something hidden; but in the New Testament it means something revealed. It had been 'kept secret' and was still hidden to the world in general; but this mystery of God's nature and God's will had now been 'made known' (Eph. 3, 3; 6, 19)." 11) The disciples, the members of His Church, should fully understand the meaning of the kingdom of God, how Christ, in and with the working of the Holy Ghost through the Gospel, engenders faith in the hearts of men, so that they might know their Savior Jesus Christ, perform truly good works by His power, and finally obtain the everlasting possession of heaven. Of those without, Christ says that He speaks everything to them in parables, and then quotes the prophecy of Isaiah, chapter 6, 9, in which it is said of the unbelieving Jews that they see indeed, that they use their eyes, and yet get no picture of that which they see, that they use their ears and yet understand not, that therefore there would not be an opportunity for them to repent and receive remission of their sins. It is one of the severe passages directed against self-hardening. This word of the prophet found its application in the days of Jesus. The judgment of God against His former people, which had begun in the days of Isaiah, was now being fully accomplished. It became more and more evident that the majority of the people that crowded to Jesus had no thought of seeking salvation in their hearts; they were merely inquisitive, they wanted to see and hear this new Prophet, about whom they had been told so many wonderful things. And so God finally condemns them to remain in their perverse, hardened mind. The Gospel of Christ, preached by Christ Himself, served the terrible purpose of hardening their hearts, it was to them a savor of death unto death. But the disciples also needed an earnest admonition. Their spiritual dulness was a great danger, theirs was the condition of so many Christians that are satisfied with just a little and do not have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil, Heb. 5, 14. The Word of God is like a mountain full of treasures. The treasures on the outside have been picked over so often that their beauties have been brought down to the plane of mere platitudes with many people; but the searcher after the pure gold will dig and delve and search, and will find ever new veins and occasionally such a rich nugget of purest gold that he stands overawed in the presence of such sublimity.

The explanation of the parable: V. 14. **The sower soweth the Word.** V. 15. **And these are they by the wayside, where the Word is sown; but when they have heard, Satan cometh immediately and taketh away the Word that was sown in their hearts.** V. 16. **And these are they likewise which are sown in stony ground; who, when they have heard the Word, immediately receive it with gladness;** v. 17. **and have no root in themselves, and so endure but for a time; afterward, when affliction or persecution ariseth for the Word's sake, immediately they are offended.** V. 18. **And these are they which are sown among thorns; such as hear the Word,** v. 19. **and the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things entering in choke the Word, and it becometh unfruitful.** V. 20. **And these are they which are sown on good ground; such as hear the Word, and receive it, and bring forth fruit, some thirtyfold, some sixty, and some an hundred.** It is Christ that sows the seed of His Word, even to-day, by the preaching of the Gospel. But the hearers of the Gospel may well be divided into four classes, according to the soil of their heart and the treatment which the Word receives at their hands. These are the chance or occasional hearers, those that forget. They are the wayside men, those in whose case the seed falls along the way. Some of these may even become regular attendants at church. But the seed of the Word remains lying on top of their hearts, it does not penetrate even the crust of their sensibilities. Here, as Christ says, it is Satan himself that takes the Word away from their hearts. The second class are the overenthusiastic hearers, that have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. The Lord here identifies them with the seed rather than with the soil, though both factors act together. They are the rocky-ground men. With a change of pastors, or due to some other cause, they suddenly, all unexpectedly, accept the Word with great joy. Their interest in matters pertaining to the Church is most gratifying. But the soil of their heart is not prepared for a lasting faith. They are influenced by the weather, both literally and figuratively. They mold their Christianity according to the times. As soon as danger signals appear along the horizon, the temperature of their zeal is reduced to a point where it no longer is of any use. Tribulation and persecution they cannot stand; it makes them lose all interest in the Church and her business. The third class of hearers of the Word are rather promising, at first glance. They hear the Word, even diligently and attentively; their intention is to be worthy Christians. But they permit other plants, dangerous weeds and thorns, to rise up in their hearts. The cares and worries of this present time engross their attention more and more. The fallacy of riches, the idea that the mere possession of money will render happy, takes hold

11) Cobern, *The New Archeological Discoveries*, 124.

of them. And finally, the desire for the other pleasures which the children of the world enjoy with such apparent satisfaction and happiness gradually blinds their hearts to the true values in life. Faith struggles for a while to maintain its position in the heart, but it fights a losing battle, it remains without fruit. But to the last class belong those Christians that have been sown into good soil, where the soil of the heart has been prepared in the proper manner by the thorough plowing of the Law and by the gentle, merciful rain of the Gospel, where the seed may sprout and grow unhindered, until the full ears speak of the rich harvest. There is a difference, of course, according to the gifts and opportunities of the individual Christian, some will yield fruit only in comparatively small measure, while others are rich in good works, but the fact of the yield is the same in all these cases. It is a searching sermon that is contained in this parable of the Lord's, and all Christians should take heed to remember the lesson: The seed that did not sprout at all; the seed that sprouted, but did not grow; the seed that sprouted and grew up, but bore no fruit; and finally the seed that came up to the expectations of the Lord.

Responsibilities of the Christians: V. 21. **And He said unto them, Is a candle brought to be put under a bushel or under a bed, and not to be set on a candlestick?** V. 22. **For there is nothing hid which shall not be manifested; neither was anything kept secret but that it should come abroad.** V. 23. **If any man have ears to hear, let him hear.** There are two reasons why Jesus introduces this thought here which He had also used in the Sermon on the Mount. The knowledge which He here transmitted to His disciples was a part of their equipment as preachers, to be used by them for the benefit of their hearers. Mere general statements as to the will of God and the salvation of mankind may, under circumstances, be very obscure, in fact, unintelligible to the average audience. And therefore such explanation is demanded as will make the meaning plain and bring the fact of God's plan of salvation home to every man. Besides, it is true, in general, that the fruit which God expects in the Christians is such as will make itself felt in the world, as will wield an influence in the every-day affairs in the Christian's neighborhood. The light does not come, it is not brought by the bearer, in order to be placed beneath an inverted bushel-measure or under a sofa, such as were used when reclining at the table, but it should be placed on a candlestick. Then it may give light to all that are in the house, Matt. 5, 15. This Christ emphasizes: That which is now yet hidden, will surely be revealed; that seems to be a definite law; — the person that conceals something, does so with the intention of bringing it out of the hiding-place at some future time. "This is universally true. Things are hid because they are precious, but precious things are meant to be used at some time and in some way." 12) It is the same thought that the Lord teaches Matt. 10, 27. The doctrine of the Gospel, the good news of the free justification of all sinners through the merits of Jesus Christ, that is hidden before men, no man knows anything of its beauty or of its comfort, and a great many so-called Christian preachers relegate it to a dismal background. But this mystery shall be revealed before the eyes of all men, both through sound Gospel-preaching and through sound Gospel-living. The Lord has a very good reason for adding His warning cry concerning the understanding of His words.

A further warning: V. 24. **And He said unto them, Take heed what ye hear: with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you; and unto you that hear shall more be given.** V. 25. **For he that hath, to him shall be given; and he that hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he hath.** Christ here uses some proverbial sayings, quoted by Him elsewhere, in a new connection, Matt. 7, 2; 13, 12. The disciples, and especially the Twelve, were now hearing, being instructed for their work as evangelists, as preachers of the Gospel. Two people may hear the same saying in an entirely different way, with a great difference as to the amount of benefit obtained. It is essential, therefore, that they keep their eyes open and watch what they hear; for careful hearing pays. The reward given to them by Christ will exceed the measure of attention if they are faithful. A Christian that studies his Bible attentively, with the object of finding in it Jesus, the Savior, John 5, 39, will be surprised by the measure of grace and understanding that will be given to him. The pastor and teacher that searches diligently will almost be overwhelmed by the mass of appropriate material that will be at his command. But a Christian that makes no headway in Bible knowledge will find even the little head knowledge that has still remained with him dull and commonplace; the pastor that does not grow in knowledge of the Scriptures will find himself growing shallow in his sermons and dull in his application. It is the judgment of God upon the indifferent and upon the lazy. "Whoso hath attention, knowledge will be given to him; and from him who hath not the seed of knowledge will be taken. For as diligence causes that seed to grow, negligence destroys it." 13)

The parable of the seed: V. 26. **And He said, So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground,** v. 27. **and should sleep, and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how.** V. 28. **For the earth**

12) *Expositor's Greek Testament*, 1, 366.

13) Euthymius, quoted in *Expositor's Greek Testament*, 1, 367.

bringeth forth fruit of herself; first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear. V. 29. **But when the fruit is brought forth, immediately he putteth in the sickle because the harvest is come.** Here is another parable, addressed especially to the disciples, and containing an important lesson for them in their future work. If a farmer sows good seed into his fields, all his worrying about the crop will avail him nothing. He will tend to his other work and will follow his usual mode of living: he will go to rest in the evening and get up in the morning. He knows that it rests with God to give the increase. And this is as it should be. For it is God's promise that seed-time and harvest shall not cease. Gen. 8, 22. By the course of nature which God has ordered the seed sprouts, the blade appears, the ear develops, the grain matures. And thus it is in spiritual matters. When a pastor has preached the Word, publicly and from house to house, he has done that work for which he has been called. Worrying about results is as foolish as it is useless. The power of God is in the Word, and it rests with Him to bless the proclamation of the Gospel according to His promise that His Word will not return to Him void, Is. 55, 10. 11. God must give the increase, 1 Cor. 3, 6. 7. Too many pastors, especially young pastors, as it has been put somewhat quaintly, want to turn around and go into the field with the reaper after they have just come out with the drill. When God's time has come, then the harvest may be gathered; He will send His scythe and bring in the ripe sheaves.

Parable of the grain of mustard-seed: V. 30. **And He said, Whereunto shall we liken the kingdom of God, or with what comparison shall we compare it?** V. 31. **It is like a grain of mustard-seed, which, when it is sown in the earth, is less than all the seeds that be in the earth;** v. 32. **But when it is sown, it groweth up, and becometh greater than all herbs, and shooteth out great branches, so that the fowls of the air may lodge under the shadow of it.** It is not a matter of indifference, but of anxious concern to the Lord, as it should be to all true teachers of the Word, in what way He can make clear to His disciples the great truths which they must understand and be thoroughly familiar with, for themselves as well as for their hearers. He wants some comparison, some parable that will bring out still more strongly the lesson of the last parable, but in its application to the entire Church. He chooses a mustard-seed for His purpose. The characteristic feature of this seed is its small size, rendering it almost insignificant in comparison with others as it is sown into the ground. The results, however, are little short of marvelous. In the proper soil, and with the right conditions, it will grow up to be the largest of the garden vegetables, becoming almost treelike in its proportions, extending its boughs in every direction, so that the birds will welcome its shade and be glad to use the protection of its branches for a roosting-place. Thus the preaching of the Gospel is considered insignificant before men. It is despised in the sight of those that prefer the philosophy and wisdom of this world. But when it comes to results, to spiritual life and strength, then human wisdom cannot even come into consideration. For the Word of God alone can take hold of a man's heart and renew it entirely, change his entire life and manner of thinking. And the same effect may be observed in the history of the Church. A mere handful of disciples assembled in the upper room in Jerusalem has grown to a body whose size is such as to be known to God only, although even the number of those that profess Christianity is very large. That fact is a source of constant comfort to all believers, whether they be pastors or not: their labor cannot be in vain, since they have the living Word to deal with.

The end of the parables: V. 33. **And with many such parables spake He the Word unto them, as they were able to hear it.** V. 34. **But without a parable spake He not unto them; and when they were alone, He expounded all things to His disciples.** The parables here related by Mark were by no means all that the Lord spoke on that day, whether in the boat or at home. The ones given here are only a few of many. He tried to fit the instruction to the understanding of His hearers, especially that of His disciples, who were strongly in need of teaching. His subject was always the same: He spoke to them the Word, the Gospel of their salvation, He wanted to impress upon them the necessity of entering into the kingdom of God, of accepting the Redeemer, of having faith planted into their hearts. This verse, then, in no way disagrees with v. 12. "Mark says, chapter 4, 33, Christ had spoken in parables to the people that they might understand it, every one according to his ability; how does this agree with what Matthew says, chapter 13, 13. 14: He spoke through parables that they might not understand? This is to be explained thus, that Mark wishes to say: The parables serve this purpose, that unlearned people comprehend the story though they do not get its meaning, and yet may afterwards be taught and then understand them. For the parables naturally please the simple folk, and they remember them easily, since they are taken from the common things, with which they are familiar. But Matthew wants to say that these parables are of a nature that no one can understand them, no matter how often he hears and comprehends the story, unless the Spirit makes them evident and reveals them. Not that they should be preached for the purpose of not being understood; but that it naturally follows, where the Spirit does not reveal, that no one understands them. And yet

Christ has taken these words from Is. 6, 9. 10, where the high understanding of divine foreknowledge is touched upon, that He conceals and reveals to whom He will and has had in mind from eternity." 14) That was the reason why this form of preaching was the usual form employed by Jesus. He was not wont to speak without a parable to the people, neither then nor at any other time. But He also had the habit of interpreting or explaining everything, parables and all teaching, to His disciples in private. He literally unloosened the difficulties, which might offer the same baffling task as a hard knot. By constant repetition of the most important doctrines and their application He intended to impress the Gospel-truths upon their minds. This method is thoroughly approved and to be recommended in the study of all the words of Christ; it will not remain without blessing.

Christ Stilling the Tempest. Mark 4, 35—41.

The departure: V. 35. **And the same day, when the even was come, He saith unto them, Let us pass over unto the other side.** V. 36. **And when they had sent away the multitude, they took Him even as He was in the ship. And there were also with Him other little ships.** V. 37. **And there arose a great storm of wind, and the waves beat into the ship, so that it was now full.** It was on the evening of the day on which Christ had taught the people and His disciples in so many parables. He was probably very tired from the strain of speaking for many hours and desired a few hours of rest. So He proposed to His disciples that they cross over to the other side of the lake. They were with Him in the boat which He had used as platform for speaking and could easily carry out this intention, at least far more easily than to attempt to break through the wall of solid humanity on the shore. They simply left the people behind them as they hoisted sail and moved away from the shore. There was no delay, but also no special provision for the trip. Just as He was, without food or refreshment of any kind, they took Him along. Even so, there were some small boats that accompanied theirs. They had proceeded for some distance when a tornadolike storm broke upon the lake, a phenomenon which was by no means unusual in the deep valley and kettlelike depression of the lake. From all sides the waves rushed upon the boat, rising so high as to fall down upon it and thus filling it with water very quickly. It was a real crisis, and one that was apt to make the heart of the strongest and most seasoned sailor quake with fear.

The miracle: V. 38. **And He was in the hinder part of the ship, asleep on a pillow. And they awake Him and say unto Him, Master, carest Thou not that we perish?** V. 39. **And He arose, and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still! And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm.** V. 40. **And He said unto them, Why are ye so fearful? How is it that ye have no faith?** V. 41. **And they feared exceedingly, and said one to another, What manner of man is this, that even the wind and the sea obey Him?** In the midst of all this turmoil Jesus, true man as He was, tired out from the day's hard work, was soundly asleep, lying in the stern of the boat, with His head on the low bench or railing known as the "pillow," used by the helmsman to rest on when the ship follows the helm without difficulty. But with His humanity thus visibly portrayed, there was combined the divinity of Him that rules all, in whose hand all the powers of nature are held securely: the storm did not bother Him in the least. But the disciples soon gave up what seemed to them an unequal struggle. They roused Him from His sleep and said to Him: Teacher, does it cause Thee no worry that we are being destroyed? They include Him in their prayer, but are chiefly concerned about their own welfare. Whether this was a cry of fear or an actual reproach, at any rate they showed little faith in crying thus. Jesus told them so even before He arose, Matt. 18, 26. But then He had compassion with their weakness. He suddenly got up, He rebuked the wind and said to the sea: Be quiet, hold your peace. And at His word the miracle was performed before their wondering eyes. The wind did not merely die down slowly, it ceased abruptly; and at once there was a great quietness, all the more noticeable after the rushing turmoil of a few minutes before. The boat was now gently parting the mirrorlike surface of the calm sea. But then the Lord took the opportunity of reproving His disciples very earnestly: How fearful are you in this manner! How is it that you have no faith? Their trust in the Lord, their confidence in His almighty power, was still very weak and uncertain. More than a dozen times Mark mentions this weakness. Undoubtedly the chagrin and deep humility of Peter caused him to dwell upon this point so often in his account of the days and the Gospel of Jesus. The impression of the miracle on the disciples was profound. They feared a great fear; they felt utterly insignificant in the presence of this man, that had given them evidence of such superhuman power. They said one to another: Who, then, is this man that wind and sea yield obedience to Him? Each of the two was a wild, lawless element; and yet He controls them as easily as though such an experience were an every-day occurrence with Him! Note the pictorial vividness of Mark's narrative: Evening, the sudden departure, the convoy of ships, the violence of the storm, the ship all but sinking, the image of Him that slept on the ship's pillow, the reproach of the distressed men that Jesus cared

14) Luther, 11, 524. 525.

not, the words of rebuke to the wind, the strong reproof of the disciples, their great fear, and its effect.15)

The evangelist here pictures Jesus, the Lord of the universe, who commands the sea, and it gives Him unquestioning obedience. The man Jesus is the almighty God. With His human voice He restored peace in the uproar of the elements. His human nature possesses also the divine glory and majesty: Jesus is an almighty man, was an almighty man even when He was here on earth in the midst of His humiliation. From that little nutshell of a boat, even while He was asleep, He governed heaven and earth, land and sea. Only His divine majesty was covered by the form of a servant. And as He did then, so He does now: He uses His divine power, His omnipotence, in the interest, in the service of men, especially of His disciples, of His believers. That is the comfort of this story.

15) Schaff, *Commentary, Mark*, 44.

Summary. *Jesus tells the parable of the fourfold soil, expounding it to His disciples, also that of the seed that is cast into the ground, of the grain of mustard-seed, and others, and makes a journey across the sea, in the course of which He stills the tempest.*

CHAPTER 5.

The Gadarene Demoniac. Mark 5, 1—20.

On the eastern shore of the lake: V. 1. **And they came over unto the other side of the sea, into the country of the Gadarenes.** The journey across the sea, which ordinarily took only a few hours, was prolonged, on account of the storm, to last all night. The next day they landed in the country of the Gergesenes, or Gadarenes, which is over against Galilee, Matt. 8, 28; Luke 8, 26. It was known by both names, from the chief cities of the neighborhood. "We read . . . that Jesus and His disciples 'came to the other side of the sea to the country of the Gerasenes.' The Authorized Version reads: 'to the country of the Gadarenes.' The country to which Jesus came at this time cannot have been that of the Decapolitan city Gerasa, for, as we have seen, that lay far to the south. It was in a direct line nearly fifty miles from the Sea of Galilee. Neither can it have been to the region of Gadara that He came, for Gadara lay at least five miles to the south across the deep valley of the Yarmuk. There was, however, on the east shore of the Sea of Galilee a town called Gergesa, the modern Kursi. This place was near the city of Hippos, and possibly one of the towns subordinate to Hippos. As Jesus and the disciples walked back from the sea, they met the demoniac, whom Jesus healed." 16) The whole region or district southeast of the Sea of Galilee was indiscriminately called that of the Gadarenes and Gerasenes. It was predominantly heathen.

The demoniac: V. 2. **And when He was come out of the ship, immediately there met Him out of the tombs a man with an unclean spirit,** v. 3. **who had his dwelling among the tombs; and no man could bind him, no, not with chains,** v. 4. **because that he had been often bound with fetters and chains, and the chains had been plucked asunder by him, and the fetters broken in pieces: neither could any man tame him.** V. 5. **And always, night and day, he was in the mountains and in the tombs, crying, and cutting himself with stones.** Matthew, in relating this story, speaks of two demoniacs, while Mark mentions only one, the speaker of the two, and probably also the fiercer of them. Hardly had Jesus stepped out of the boat when this man came running to meet Him from his home among the tombs in the neighborhood. He was a man in, that is, fully possessed by, an unclean spirit. The power of the devil and his angels is such that it always renders the person whom he gets into his dominion, spiritually unclean. Here the whole person, body, mind, and soul, was possessed of the devil. This demoniac had his dwelling-place in the tombs, probably in some of the burial-places which had been excavated or hewn into the side of the hills. His fierceness was such as to make his confinement by means of fetters and chains absolutely impossible. The piling up of the negatives emphasizes this peculiarity very strongly. All attempts to keep him in constraint by means of foot-guards and with chains had been futile. He tore the chains apart and shattered the foot-guards, whether of metal or rope, and no man was able in any way to keep him in subjection. All the methods employed in the case of wild animals availed nothing in his case. The strength of the devil and his angels in him was too great for human skill and ingenuity. He was given no rest by the tormentors living in him, but always, night and day, he was driven by them through the tombs and through the hills, making it dangerous to travel in that neighborhood. The people that caught sight of him saw that he was usually engaged in striking and mutilating himself with sharp stones, uttering at the same time fierce cries that might well cause the stoutest heart to quail. It is a terrible thing if the devil gains ascendency over a person, not one whit less so if this power extends over his mind and soul only than if it includes also the body.

16) Barton, *Archeology and the Bible*, 214.

Acknowledging Jesus as the superior: V. 6. **But when he saw Jesus afar off, he ran**

and worshiped Him, v. 7. and cried with a loud voice and said, What have I to do with Thee, Jesus, Thou Son of the most high God? I adjure Thee by God that Thou torment me not. V. 8. For He said unto Him, Come out of the man, thou unclean spirit. V. 9. And He asked him, What is thy name? And he answered, saying, My name is Legion; for we are many. V. 10. And he besought Him much that He would not send them away out of the country. Other people had been in danger of their lives on account of the fierceness of the man. Demoniac strength and utter misery were combined in the poor sufferer. But here the man saw Jesus, and Him the evil spirits knew, had known Him from the time that they were, together with their leader, Satan, thrown out of heaven, Jude, v. 6. They must needs recognize Him, no matter where they met Him, as their sovereign Lord and King. And so the man came running and did the Lord homage, casting himself down at His feet in a worshipful attitude, acknowledging even by his action that he knew Jesus to be the Lord. And at the same time, with a cry of fear and prayer, he begs Christ: What business have we two, Thou and I, together, Jesus, Thou Son of God most high? The confession was apparently wrung from him under the pressure of abject terror, together with the plea that Jesus should not torment him, not condemn him at this time to the torment of hell, which was his eventual lot, just as he was even then suffering damnation in being banished from heaven. The evil spirits thus were obliged to recognize in Christ their future Judge, wanted to be rid of His presence, and yet must plead for the slightest favor and extension of time. For though the place of torment is even now their home, yet, by God's permission, in the interval before the last Judgment, they have power to torture and destroy God's creatures on earth. They, more than any one else, dread the last Judgment. For then the place of torment will become a dungeon from which there is no escape and no hope of the slightest reprieve. Then they will see and feel nothing but the fire which was prepared for the devil and his angels. Then the torture of damnation will never have an end, 2 Pet. 2, 4. This cry of terror was occasioned by the fact that Christ was just about to say (conative imperfect); it was evident from Christ's manner and look that it was on His tongue to speak the word which would release the poor sufferer from the clutches of his tormentors. Christ now permits an intermission in the proceedings lest the evil spirits vent their spite on the man. He asked the demoniac: What name is thine? And the answer, with the explanation, was: Legion, on account of their great number. Not only one unclean spirit was here devastating the temple of the poor man's body, but a host of them. For the Roman legion comprised a number of between five and six thousand men, and the members of such a body were united under iron discipline. The name was thus the "emblem of irresistible power and of a multitude organized into unity." 17) The devil is not so listless in his method of attack as the Christians are in warding it off. Not only does he walk about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he might devour, but he has his armies, the spirits of darkness, trained in obedience and concerted attack. The spirits now begged Jesus not to send them out of this region which they seem to have favored on account of the nature of the population. It is a strange thing to find the devil pleading with the Lord for a favor; but if it suits his plans, he can be most abject.

The casting out: V. 11. **Now there was there nigh unto the mountains a great herd of swine feeding.** V. 12. **And all the devils besought Him, saying, Send us into the swine that we may enter into them.** V. 13. **And forthwith Jesus gave them leave. And the unclean spirits went out and entered into the swine; and the herd ran violently down a steep place into the sea, (they were about two thousand;) and were choked in the sea.** Not in the immediate vicinity of the speaker, but at some distance, yet in plain sight, on the slope of the hills near the sea, there was a large herd of swine grazing. To the Jews, swine were unclean animals, and they were not allowed to eat them. But here on the border the inhabitants were influenced but little by Jewish customs and laws. The evil spirits knew that Jesus would not give them permission to enter into any *man*, and therefore they wanted to vent their spite and helpless anger on *dumb animals*. They changed their plea to this effect, that they might take possession of the swine. The devil is a murderer from the beginning. If he cannot destroy the soul of man, he takes possession of the body; and when this is forbidden him, he tortures brute beasts. His one desire is to destroy the life which God has created. Jesus here permitted, gave leave to, the spirits to do as they had asked; it was better that animals should perish than that man, made in the image of God, should be tormented. The result: With a mighty uproar the swine, numbering about two thousand, cast themselves down the precipice overhanging the sea, and were drowned in the water. The devil, in his work of destruction, is not permitted to go one step farther than God gives him leave. Note: Why it is that God sometimes permits the spirits of darkness and destruction to work harm to His creation is one of the secrets which our weak reason cannot fathom. We know only so much, that the loss of money and goods are chastisements of God, by which He intends to rouse men out of their security.

The effect of the miracle: V. 14. **And they that fed the swine fled, and told it in the**

17) *Expositor's Greek Testament*, 1, 372.

city and in the country. And they went out to see what it was that was done. V. 15. And they come to Jesus, and see him that was possessed with the devil and had the legion, sitting, and clothed, and in his right mind; and they were afraid. V. 16. And they that saw it told them how it befell to him that was possessed with the devil, and also concerning the swine. V. 17. And they began to pray Him to depart out of their coasts. A sad sequel: pigs held in higher esteem than man. Note the pithy, vivid narration of the evangelist. The swineherders fled and announced to the owners in the city and the vicinity the fate of their property, and these came to verify the report, probably with some resentment against the man that had deprived them, even if only indirectly, of their swine. Their way led directly to Jesus, and they could now gain the conviction that the former demoniac was thoroughly healed. He that had formerly run through the hills with loud cries now sat at the feet of Jesus as quietly as any one else might have done; he that had formerly discarded all clothing was now fully clothed; he that had formerly raved in madness now had the full use of his mind and senses. It was a sight which might well fill them with fear. And as they were standing around, the witnesses of the miracle related the entire story, the cure and the subsequent catastrophe, which had resulted in the loss of the swine. Jesus, by this miracle, had again proved Himself the mighty Deliverer from the power of Satan. This much must be evident to all. It was a visitation of mercy upon these people that the great Prophet from Galilee had come into their midst. But here it proved to be true what experience testifies to in a thousand cases: the power of the devil over the heart of man is more insidious and terrible than that over the members. The eyes of these people were not opened. They began, all of them, to urge Him to leave the country. "They took heart to desire Christ's departure, in a conflict of fear and anger, of fawning and obstinacy." They spurned the time of their visitation. The Lord often tries people whom He would make His own, by sending them some form of misfortune to cause them to turn from the service of earthly things to Him. But they do not know the things that belong to their peace, they are hidden from their eyes. They feel resentment against the Lord, they refuse to accept His mercy, and choose for themselves the path that leads to destruction.

Christ gives further evidence of His mercy: **V. 18. And when He was come into the ship, he that had been possessed with the devil prayed Him that he might be with Him. V. 19. Howbeit Jesus suffered him not, but saith unto him, Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee. V. 20. And he departed, and began to publish in Decapolis how great things Jesus had done for him. And all men did marvel.** Jesus embarked again, He went into the boat. Since the people of the region showed such a hostile spirit from the start and did not consider themselves worthy of eternal life, He left them with the animals they loved more. But one there was that had felt more than a bodily healing in himself, the former demoniac. He begged the Lord, while the latter was embarking, to be permitted to be with Him, to become a regular disciple. It was not the fear of the return of the demons that caused the plea, but the knowledge that here was a Healer of the soul as well as of the body. But Jesus refused his petition, since He had a different plan in mind. His time of mercy for the people of this region had not yet come to an end. He commissioned this man to be the first heathen preacher. He should return to his home and to his relatives, giving them a full account of the help which he had experienced, and above all of the mercy of Jesus. Of all the blessings and benefits which we praise as the gift of the Lord the greatest is that of His mercy in Jesus Christ the Savior. And the man did even more than the Lord had given him to perform. Beginning, no doubt, in his own family circle, he became a messenger throughout that entire country. The Decapolis, or the region of the ten cities, was that part of Palestine that lay southeast and east of the Sea of Galilee, including parts of Perea and Gaulanitis. Throughout this region he proclaimed his message, seconded undoubtedly by the other demoniac. And the heathen population, which for the most part inhabited this country, was deeply impressed. They all were filled with wonder. Whether there was any other result is not related. At any rate, they had the opportunity of learning to know the great Prophet, who was willing and anxious to give them the assurance of His everlasting grace and mercy and thus to fulfil the object of the Gospel in them. It is ever thus that the message of the great miracles of God for the salvation of men arouses curiosity and wonder. But the Gospel also always works, at least in some people, a cheerful assent and acceptance of the news that will save their souls.

Raising of the Daughter of Jairus.

Mark 5, 21—43.

The prayer of Jairus: **V. 21. And when Jesus was passed over again by ship unto the other side, much people gathered unto Him; and He was nigh unto the sea. V. 22. And, behold, there cometh one of the rulers of the synagog, Jairus by name; and when he saw Him, he fell at His feet, v. 23. and besought Him greatly, saying, My little daughter lieth at the point of death; I pray Thee, come and lay Thy hands on her that she may be healed, and**

she shall live. V. 24. **And Jesus went with him; and much people followed Him and thronged Him.** Mark relates this story at greater length, with closer attention to detail than the other evangelists, Matt. 9, 18; Luke 8, 41, except in the matter of symptoms of the sickness, in which Luke, the physician, is more exact. Upon leaving the country of the Gerasenes, Jesus sailed directly across the sea, back to the region which He had left only the day before. Most of the people had undoubtedly not yet thought of returning home, and they could therefore soon assemble once more and come to Him, as He was by the Sea. They gladly received Him, for they were all waiting for Him, Luke 8, 41. But before He had had an opportunity of performing the work of His ministry, as was His custom, one of the chief men, of the rulers of the local synagog, whose name was Jairus, came, looking for Jesus. As soon as he saw the Lord, the distraught father fell down at His feet and begged and urged Him most earnestly, with many words. The words pour forth from his mouth in the anxiety of his pleading: My daughter is about breathing her last; she may even now be dead. Come at once and quickly; lay Thy hands upon her that she may be healed and live. Jesus, after His usual manner of kind sympathy and willingness to help, did not tarry by the seaside, but turned at once to go after the pleading father. It was, as usual, the faith implied and expressed in his words that impressed the Lord. Jairus was sure — he was possessed of unshakable faith — that Jesus could perform this miracle, this cure. He sees the fulfilment of his wish, if Christ would but consent to come. But he must first pass through a test of his patience. Mark notes especially that the people pressed around the Lord from all sides; He was jostled and pushed with the crowd.

The woman with an issue of blood: V. 25. **And a certain woman, which had had an issue of blood twelve years,** v. 26. **and had suffered many things of many physicians, and had spent all that she had, and was nothing bettered, but rather grew worse,** v. 27. **when she had heard of Jesus, came in the press behind, and touched His garment.** V. 28. **For she said, If I may touch but His clothes, I shall be whole.** V. 29. **And straightway the fountain of her blood was dried up; and she felt in her body that she was healed of that plague.** While Jesus was, at the urging of Jairus, hurrying towards his house, there was an interruption on the way. A woman, otherwise unknown, had had an issue of blood for twelve years, which rendered her Levitically unclean, Lev. 15, 25. It excluded her from public worship in Temple and synagog, and isolated her even from the company of her relatives. The manner of Mark's putting it is rather expressive: She had suffered much from, at the hands of, many physicians; she had become impoverished, she had spent all her substance in her quest for health; and all this had been of no benefit to her; instead of getting better she rather became worse. This description is particularly suitable in the case of those people, both within and without the medical profession, who think that science is paramount and must say the last word. In spite of the great advance in medicine and surgery in the last century, and especially during the last decades, there are still many individual sicknesses and epidemics that baffle the entire medical profession. This is not said in disparagement of the profession, but in the interest of truth. People that make the doctor their god, and trust in him absolutely, may under circumstances find themselves in the position of this woman. It remains true to this day, and the more skilful and conscientious the physician is, the more freely will he acknowledge it: the Lord must direct the diagnosis and bless the medicine, otherwise the science of the greatest physician will avail nothing. This woman had now heard of Jesus, the many laudatory things that were being circulated through the country concerning His ability and willingness to work healing in cases which seemed hopeless. Her condition and the consciousness of her Levitical uncleanness, also her deep humility would not permit her to come forth openly before the multitude and address the Lord. From what she had heard concerning Him, she had come to believe with a conviction born of faith in this Messiah of the world, that the mere touch of the hem of His garment would restore her health. She could carry out her intention all the more easily in this great crowd since they pressed upon the Lord. She hoped thus to remain unobserved. Only to touch His clothes, that was her one thought. And her faith was rewarded. Without delay, at once, the fountain of her blood was dried up, and she knew with a happy conviction that her body was cured of that scourge which the Lord had laid upon her these many years. There is food for thought, as Luther suggests, in the fact that the suffering of this woman had begun at the same time that the daughter of Jairus had come to gladden the hearts of her parents. To bear such a burden as this woman did for so many years, and then to be released from the afflicting bonds, is an experience which should rightly cause the deepest thankfulness in the hearts of all such sufferers.

The woman's confession: V. 30. **And Jesus, immediately knowing in Himself that virtue had gone out of Him, turned Him about in the press and said, Who touched My clothes?** V. 31. **And His disciples said unto Him, Thou seest the multitude thronging Thee, and sayest Thou, Who touched Me?** V. 32. **And He looked round about to see her that had done this thing.** V. 33. **But the woman, fearing and trembling, knowing what was done in her, came and**

fell down before Him, and told Him all the truth. V. 34. And He said unto her, Daughter, thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace, and be whole of thy plague. Jesus, the almighty God, is also omniscient. He knew all the while what the poor woman had been planning in her anxiety to regain her health. He was also fully conscious in Himself that a miraculous power had gone forth from Him. He had permitted the people before to touch Him in order to be made whole, chapter 3, 10. But here was a case in which the woman had taken the liberty, in trusting faith, to draw the healing power out of Him. So He made ready to test her faith. Turning round, He inquired whether any one had touched His clothes, or, more exactly: Who touched My clothes? And He immediately looked about to see whether the woman would confess. To the disciples His question seemed more than strange. He was in the midst of the crowd, jostled on all sides. Why, then, ask the question as to who had touched Him? But the woman realized that her act had been discovered and was known to the Lord. She was trembling with fear for her daring, and therefore came, fell down before Him, and told Him the whole truth, the entire story of her illness and its misery and suffering, and the hopes that she had entertained since learning of His wonderful miracles of healing. If people would but practise this method of dealing with the Lord oftener, there would be less suffering in the world. He is always ready to hear the recital of all our woes and trials, and He is willing to help us at all times. His help may not always be along the lines that we think right, but it will always be in the way that is best for us. "Such touching the Lord does not want to permit to be secret; as an example to us. Therefore He urges the woman with His questions that she must come forward and permit herself to be seen, also tell everything that had been done to her publicly before everybody, in order that He may have cause to praise such faith and teach us all what a cheerful service it is for Him, if we console ourselves with His help and expect nothing but good from Him. Therefore He praises the woman so highly and speaks to her so encouragingly: Be of good cheer, daughter; thy faith hath helped thee. There the disciples themselves must admit that the Lord has not asked in vain, and that it was not an ordinary touching, but something out of the ordinary, upon which much depends for the Lord and for ourselves. — But it is a peculiar speech which Jesus here makes, if we would think of it. He confesses that a power has gone forth from Him. As the woman now stands before the Lord and confesses the benefit, He does not show that such power has gone forth from Him, but ascribes it to the faith of the woman, although not she herself, but the Lord had helped her. This the Lord does for this reason, to indicate how well that pleases Him if thou expect everything good from Him and seek help from Him. As though He would say: Watch closely and learn cheerfully to believe, no matter in what trouble you happen to be; for I would much rather help you than you are able to ask it. I would much rather deliver you from death than that you desire life, as He here gives evidence with His action, where it is so easily done, and He so gladly permits the power to go from Him." 18) That word: Thy faith hath healed thee, gives the real reason for the cure. True faith can do anything in the sight of God, but its special strength lies in the spiritual field. The trust growing out of redeeming faith must be a conviction so firm, so undoubting, that it is ready to storm heaven itself, by His promise. And this conviction, that they can do all things through Christ that strengtheneth them, must live in all Christians.

Jesus reassures Jairus: V. 35. **While He yet spake, there came from the ruler of the synagog's house certain which said, Thy daughter is dead; why troublest thou the Master any further? V. 36. As soon as Jesus heard the word that was spoken, He saith unto the ruler of the synagog, Be not afraid, only believe! V. 37. And He suffered no man to follow Him, save Peter, and James, and John, the brother of James.** The delay caused by the woman had made Jesus and the entire multitude stop for some time, perhaps for five to ten minutes, with Jairus in the throes of impatience. And Jesus had not yet finished His comforting words to the woman that had been healed in such a miraculous manner, when some messengers from the house of the ruler brought the overwhelming news that the girl had died, that she was even now lying there dead, lifeless. There could be no doubt as to this fact, and that fact also, in the opinion of the messengers, settled the question. This being so, why should Jairus persist in vexing, molesting the Lord, the great Teacher; it was all useless now. These servants had been willing enough to concede that the great Prophet might be able to heal a person, to drive away a sickness, but His art and power could not be expected to avail anything in the case of death. Jesus heard this communication, and it gave Him much concern. Jairus had proved himself one that trusted in the Lord, but with the present intelligence there was danger that his confidence would be lost. So Jesus gave him a word which was to hold his wavering confidence: Fear not; only believe! Fear is incompatible with faith, Rom. 8, 15; Is. 12, 2; 2 Tim. 1, 7; 1 John 4, 18. Firm trust in the power of the Savior was now more necessary than ever, for death had claimed the girl as his victim, and the father should feel that Christ was able to call her back even from the land of the departed. And now Jesus did a sur-

18) Luther, 13a, 975. 976.

prising, unusual thing: He turned back, not only the multitude, but even His disciples, with the exception of His most intimate friends, Peter, James, and John. The miracle which was to take place in this house was not to be performed before the inquisitive gaze of an unappreciative multitude, nor before such as were not soundly balanced in their relation to Him.

Recalling the dead girl to life: V. 38. **And He cometh to the house of the ruler of the synagog, and seeth the tumult, and them that wept and wailed greatly.** V. 39. **And when He was come in, He saith unto them, Why make ye this ado and weep? The damsel is not dead, but sleepeth.** V. 40. **And they laughed Him to scorn. But when He had put them all out, He taketh the father and the mother of the damsel, and them that were with Him, and entereth in where the damsel was lying.** V. 41. **And He took the damsel by the hand and said unto her, Talitha, cumi; which is, being interpreted, Damsel, I say unto thee, arise.** V. 42. **And straightway the damsel arose and walked; for she was of the age of twelve years. And they were astonished with a great astonishment.** V. 43. **And He charged them straitly that no man should know it; and commanded that something should be given her to eat.** Upon arriving at the house of Jairus, they were met by sights and sounds that emphasized the fact of a dead person's being on the premises. Even the poorest Jews felt constrained to hire two pipers and at least one woman to take care of the mourning in the case of a death. Note: Mark calls attention, above all, to the turmoil, to the confused din caused by the many mourners; Matthew speaks of the minstrels and the piping; Luke refers to the weeping and bewailing. They were busily engaged when Jesus stepped into the house with His companions, weeping and howling without restraint. But Jesus took charge of the situation at once. He reproached them for the noise they were making, stating that the child was not dead, but sleeping. Those were the words of a man that lived in the certainty of the resurrection, Jesus Christ, the Master of death, who has conquered and bound death. "These words we should diligently note, that the Lord here says: The damsel is not dead, but sleepeth; for they are comforting words, for which, if they were purchasable, we should glady pay all, in order that we might remember, understand, and believe them. For he that can look upon a dead person as though he were merely lying in bed; he that can change his eyesight so that he can look upon death as a sleep, — he might well boast of a peculiar art, which no man otherwise possesses. . . . Therefore learn from this gospel that death, in the sight of Christ the Lord, is nothing but a sleep, as we see here that He wakes the dead maiden with the hand, as out of a sleep." 19) The derisive laughter of the official mourners did not deter the Lord for a minute. He cast them all out of the house, not one was permitted to remain as witness of the miracle. He then took the father and mother of the maiden, as the parents, and His three disciples as witnesses, went into the room of death, grasped the maiden by the hand, and spoke the almighty words: Maiden, arise. He used the Aramaic language, which was probably the tongue which He learned as a boy, and which He commonly employed in His discourses. Mark translates the words for the sake of his Roman readers. Death was obliged to flee at the words of Christ, it must yield its hold on the maiden's body. The girl could get up from her couch, she could walk about, she could partake of food; in short, she was returned to life, she was fully recovered. And she could now sustain life by the usual means. No wonder that those present, parents and disciples, were astonished and wrought up almost to ecstasy, since this miracle was the first one to show the power of Christ over the most dreaded enemy of mankind. Jesus finally gave them all orders that they should not make it public. He wants no false Messianic hopes to be aroused, and the way and manner of the restoration should also not be made a matter of common talk. Especially should the expectation of the repetition of such acts not be awakened in the people, lest His ministry be seriously interfered with. We have in Jesus, to this day, the Lord that can save from death. And when Christ, our Life, will be made manifest on that great day, then He will awaken, by the almighty power of His voice, all our dead relatives and friends, and will take all that died in the faith in Him, into the eternal home above which He has prepared for them that love Him. "We should, then, learn from this gospel that all misfortune, no matter how great it appears before thine eyes, is before our Lord Jesus less than nothing. For since death in a Christian is nothing, then blindness, leprosy, pestilence, and other sickness must be still smaller and of less import. Therefore, if Thou seest sin, sickness, poverty, or anything else in thee, do not let this terrify thee; close thy carnal eyes and open the spiritual ones, and say: I am a Christian, and I have a Lord who with one word can stop all this foolishness; why should I be so seriously worried about it? For certain it is, as easily as Christ helps this maiden out of bodily death, in which she was lying, so easily will He help us also, if only we believe and trust Him to help us." 20)

Summary. *Jesus drives out the devils from the Gadarene demoniac and makes him His witness in the region of Decapolis; He then returns to the west side of the sea, heals the woman with the issue of blood, and raises the daughter of Jairus from the dead.*

19) Luther, 13a, 980. 20) Luther, 13a, 983.

DEMONIAC POSSESSION.

Concerning possession by demoniacs and its healing we have reports only in the first three gospels, while John makes no mention of these miracles of Jesus. It is peculiar, also, that the narratives of the healing of people possessed with evil spirits are confined to the ministry of Christ in Galilee. In all accounts there is no instance of a miracle of this kind during the last part of the Lord's life, in Judea. Mark, who gives the most complete account of these healings, mentions four cases: the healing of the demoniac in the synagog of Capernaum, 1, 23—27; Luke 4; the healing of the Gadarene, 5, 1—13; Matt. 8; Luke 8; the daughter of the Syrophenician woman, 7, 24—30; Matt. 15; the healing of the boy with the dumb spirit, whose father had first brought him to the disciples, a lunatic, 9, 17—29; Matt. 17; Luke 9. Mark also, besides mentioning the fact that Jesus cast out many devils, 1, 34, speaks of the healing of Mary Magdalene, from whom the Lord cast out seven devils, 16, 9. Details of this healing are not given in the Scriptures. The other evangelists mention or describe the following cases: the healing of the dumb man that was possessed with a devil, Matt. 9, 32. 33; the healing of one possessed with a devil, blind, and dumb, Matt. 12, 22; the healing of the woman that had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years, and was bowed together, and could in no wise lift up herself, Luke 13, 11.

In many cases the details are not given. "He suffered not the devils to speak," Mark 1, 34; "He cast out devils," 1, 39; "unclean spirits fell down before Him," 3, 11. 12. We are told also that the Lord gave His disciples power over unclean spirits, Mark 6, 7, and that the latter cast out many devils, v. 13. The seventy returned with the report that even the devils were subject to them through the Lord's name, Luke 10, 17; and Christ gave His disciples the final promise, before His ascension: "In My name shall they cast out devils," Mark 16, 17.

In general, it may be said that in all these cases only such symptoms are named as are found also in the case of the usual sicknesses: deaf, dumb, blind, epileptic, lame, and insane. But there are three points which plainly distinguish the cases mentioned in the gospels from ordinary diseases with similar symptoms: 1) They say things which they cannot possibly know in the natural order of things, namely, that Jesus is the Son of the most high God, that He is the Son of God, etc.; 2) they possess supernatural strength, they cannot be held with chains and fetters; 3) in the case of the Gadarene demoniacs, they caused the whole herd of swine to cast themselves into the sea.

In addition to this, it should be noted that Mark distinguishes the demoniacs from the ordinary sick people by the words: "He healed many that were sick of divers diseases, and cast out many devils," 1, 34, and: "They brought unto Him all that were diseased, and them that were possessed with devils," v. 32. It would therefore not be correct to say that these demoniacs were simply ill, and that the devil had received permission from God to transmit to them a special disease, as in the case of Job. The healing of demoniacs implied more than that. It meant actually that people were possessed by evil spirits that tormented them in some peculiar fashion, made them ill, caused them to do and say things which they would not have thought of otherwise, and in other ways vented their spite on them, and that Jesus drove these spirits out.

In regard to the question whether this peculiar malady, possession of evil spirits, is still found in our days, and especially, whether this is true in individual cases, it is best to hold opinion and judgment in abeyance. People have confessed in some cases that they could actually feel the power of the devil, who also tormented them in their body in a most excruciating manner. But we have no Scriptural ground for assuming the existence of this form of disease in our days. But that is true, and cannot be denied, that Satan takes possession of the heart and mind of man, makes him spiritually blind, dead, and an enemy of God. He has his constant work in the children of unbelief, and also makes use of every opportunity to hurt and harm us in our body and in our earthly possessions, in so far as God permits this, either as a divine punishment or as a fatherly chastisement.[21])

21) *Syn. Ber., Iowa Dist.*, 1907, 41. 42.

CHAPTER 6.

Jesus at Nazareth. Mark 6, 1—6a.

Another tour of Galilee: V. 1. **And He went out from thence and came into His own country; and His disciples follow Him.** V. 2. **And when the Sabbath-day was come, He began to teach in the synagog; and many hearing Him were astonished, saying, From whence hath this man these things? and what wisdom is this which is given unto Him, that even such mighty works are wrought by His hands?** V. 3. **Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of James, and Joses, and of Juda, and Simon? and are not His sisters here with us? And they were offended at Him.** V. 4. **But Jesus said unto them, A prophet is not without honor but in his own country, and among his own kin, and in his own house.** From thence, from Capernaum and its vicinity, Jesus went away. The city which He had chosen as His home during His Galilean ministry had had ample opportunity of hearing Him and of knowing and accepting Him as the Savior of the world. Till now the success of His preaching had not been unqualified. The people were willing enough to see the Prophet perform miracles, but took little or no interest in the Word of eternal life.

And so He removed the mercy of His presence from them, returning there only at the end of His labors in the North. He went to His fatherland, to His home town, Nazareth. It was the city in which He had grown up, from which He hailed, in which He naturally took a great interest, chapter 1, 9. 24. His disciples, especially the Twelve that were now enrolled under that name, followed Him. Their theological training was being carried forward with all speed, for the time was short. When it was Sabbath, Jesus went to the synagog. Note: Throughout the gospels, the attendance of Jesus at services is related as a matter of course; it was self-evident for Him to be in the place where the Word of God was taught, at the time set apart for that purpose. Here the usual courtesy shown to a visiting teacher was extended to Him: He began to teach. It was not merely that He started His discourse, but He wanted the people of His home town to be the beneficiaries of the Gospel-message; for since the beginning of His ministry He had not been in this neighborhood. The address, or talk, as He delivered it that morning, was of a nature and of a content such as to provoke the greatest surprise and astonishment among His hearers. The comments were many and varied, and Mark records them faithfully: Whence did all this come to this man, this ability to speak, the wonderful content of His address, the power to perform such mighty works of which we have been told? Such speech, such wisdom, such powers in such a well-known person? How is it possible? What can it mean? But this eagerness for information, which might well have served as a type of curiosity for saving knowledge, was soon replaced by jealousy and contempt, the spirit of opposition. Some sneering remarks are heard: Is not this the carpenter, the worker in wood? — the trades of the carpenter, the joiner, and the cabinetmaker being united in one person. A Christian writer of the second century who had been born in Samaria relates that Jesus during His early manhood made plows and yokes. The people of Nazareth thought they were thoroughly familiar with His family and antecedents. The son of Mary He is to them, Joseph having died, according to tradition, when Jesus was eighteen years old. His brothers (half-brothers, cousins) James and Joses and Judas and Simon were well known to the townspeople, as were the sisters of Christ (half-sisters, cousins). They thought that these facts precluded the possibility of His having learned anything worth while, not realizing that they were thereby passing judgment upon their own town and upon themselves, just as is done to-day, in similar situations. The upshot of the whole matter was that they were offended at Him, that is, they took offense wrongfully. Note: Even to-day people take offense at the lowliness of the Gospel and its preaching. If it came to them in the guise of something new, a new philosophical system, they would think it worth their while; but the simplicity of the Gospel, and the fact that they have been familiar with its teaching, as they foolishly think, from their youth, sets them against its glorious tidings and shuts them out from the glories of heaven. Jesus, among other things, Matt. 13, 54—57, reminded them of a proverbial saying which fitted the case perfectly: Not is a prophet without honor except in his fatherland and among his kinsmen. This is a truth which is universally accepted. Instead of rejoicing over the fact that God has given one of their own family, out of their own midst, gifts and abilities to accomplish something for His honor, the kinsmen and former fellow-citizens will do everything in their power to discredit him. That was Christ's experience.

The result of the opposition: V. 5. **And He could there do no mighty work, save that He laid His hands upon a few sick folk and healed them.** V. 6a. **And He marveled because of their unbelief.** Jesus had come with an open hand to distribute from His own bounty and that of His Father. The reception accorded Him shut off the people from the gifts of His mercy. Unbelief hindered the exhibition of the Lord's miraculous power. Unbelief always stops the hand of God when He extends it to shower His benefits upon mankind. Unbelief is, therefore, the sin of sins, since it rejects what God is so willing to give in and through Christ. Jesus indeed, in a quiet way, performed a few miracles in laying His hands upon a few sick persons, but these were exceptions. The community as such received no benefit from the visit of Jesus. Their unbelief was such that it caused even Jesus to wonder. To us, of course, it is an even greater mystery that men should reject Jesus and the Word of their salvation. But that should not cause us to become disheartened in our work for Him; the result of our labors is in His hands.

The Mission of the Twelve. Mark 6, 6b—13.

Preparations for their journey: V. 6b. **And He went round about the villages, teaching.** V. 7. **And He called unto Him the Twelve, and began to send them forth by two and two; and gave them power over unclean spirits;** v. 8. **and commanded them that they should take nothing for their journey, save a staff only; no scrip, no bread, no money in their purse,** v. 9. **but be shod with sandals; and not put on two coats.** Note: The people of Nazareth rejected the Lord, they wanted nothing of Him; but that did not discourage Him nor cause Him to abandon His work for others, — a significant hint for us in the work for Christ. And while He was making His journey through the villages of Lower Galilee, continuing His labors in the Word, He taught His disciples. The Twelve were now to become His associates; they were, in a measure, to work in an in-

dependent capacity. And for the beginning of this work He gives them special instructions. To make their ministry somewhat easier, to give the individual a sort of moral backing, He sent them forth two by two. As a necessary part of their equipment, that they might substantiate their mission, He gave them power over unclean spirits, over demons that were wont to torment people. The authority and the ability to command these evil spirits argued for a power beyond human endeavor, and would thus give their preaching the necessary prestige. Their luggage, dunnage, or duffel for their journey was to be kept at the minimum. They should take nothing on the trip, for the way, not even a staff, no bread, no hand-bag, no money in their girdle; literally: He gave them instructions not to take anything for their trip, not only not a staff, no bread, not a sack, no money in the girdle, but be provided with sandals, also not to put on two tunics. What the Lord said in these words is plain: It is not at all necessary that you be fully equipped for your preaching-trip; you are not going out for a vacation journey, but to labor in the ministry of the Word.[22] The sack of which the Lord here speaks throws an interesting side-light upon customs in those days. "The wallet mentioned is now seen not to have been a mere traveling-bag, as was formerly supposed, but almost certainly a beggar's 'collecting bag,' such as peripatetic religious teachers were accustomed to carry at that time, for it is called by this same name. Our Lord means to teach that His disciples are to go out as laymen, not in any special ministerial garb or making any special claim of mendicant piety, but nevertheless dependent for their living upon those who receive the Word."[23] Those that serve the Gospel should not be weighted down by a great deal of earthly baggage, should not be involved in the business of this world, lest their ministry be harmed and the effect of their preaching be spoiled. "They should speak or do nothing for the sake of money, favor, honor, not set their hearts upon money, honor, goods. The ministry of the Word seeks something different, has a different object, namely, eternal salvation and the honor of God."[24]

Further instruction: V. 10. **And He said unto them, In what place soever ye enter into an house, there abide till ye depart from that place.** V. 11. **And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear you, when ye depart thence, shake off the dust under your feet for a testimony against them. Verily I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the Day of Judgment than for that city.** V. 12. **And they went out, and preached that men should repent.** V. 13. **And they cast out many devils, and anointed with oil many that were sick, and healed them.** Wherever it may be that they entered into a house, whether in city or town or village, there, in that house, they should stay. They should neither lose time for their work by searching for a pleasant boarding-place, nor should they bring themselves into the suspicion of partiality. In the house which they should enter first they should stay until they left the village or neighborhood; that should be their home for the time being. If, however, it should so happen that some place, city, town, or village, would not receive them nor its inhabitants listen to them, they should go away from that place. And in so doing, they should shake the very dust, not only from their feet and clothing, but the dust under their feet, the dust from the roads that adhered to the soles of their sandals. This was a sign that there could be no communion with such foolish and untractable people, that they must be considered on a level with the heathen. It was a testimony, a judgment upon them. The people of Sodom and Gomorrah, that had been exterminated by one of the most awful visitations of God upon the wicked, will receive a more lenient sentence on the last day than such wilful opponents of the mercy of God. The twelve disciples followed instructions; they carried out their mission through preaching and healing. The burden of their call was the need of repentance, in order that the sweet news of the Gospel might find a ready acceptance. Mark also relates that they expelled many demons and effected the cure of many suffering with various minor ailments. The power of the Lord went with them, according to His promise.

Death of John the Baptist. Mark 6, 14—32.

Conjectures concerning the identity of Christ: V. 14. **And King Herod heard of Him; (for His name was spread abroad:) and he said, That John the Baptist was risen from the dead, and therefore mighty works do show forth themselves in him.** V. 15. **Others said, That it is Elias. And others said, That it is a prophet, or as one of the prophets.** V. 16. **But when Herod heard thereof, he said, It is John, whom I beheaded; he is risen from the dead.** Where there is no fear of God, superstition reigns supreme. Herod's conscience was bothering him for a crime which had been committed some time before. Hearing of the mighty deeds of Jesus, as His name and fame spread throughout the country, Herod advanced the theory that John the Baptist had arisen from the dead and because of that fact supernatural powers were being manifested in him; the fear of ghosts and haunts coming to the foreground. Others believed that Elijah, who had always been vested with special powers,

22) *Lehre u. Wehre*, 1914, Okt.—Nov., 447 ff. 499.

23) Cobern, *The New Archeological Discoveries*, 126.

24) Luther, quoted in Stoeckhardt, *Biblische Geschichte des Neuen Testaments*, 117.

and whose return was definitely looked for by a great many Jews, in a misunderstanding of Mal. 4, 5, was represented in the person of Jesus. Still others thought that the Lord was a prophet like one of the prophets of old, that also had gone about in the country of the Jews, preaching and performing miracles. But though Herod may have heard the opinions of the others through his courtiers, he clung to his statement: Him whom I beheaded, John, it is; he is risen. The torment of a bad conscience, of a guilty heart, is worse than any torture that might be devised by man. It causes people to suspect where there is no ground for suspicion, and puts ghosts before the eyes of men where there is no reason for fear. Herod had reasons for trembling.

Herod reproved by John: V. 17. **For Herod himself had sent forth and laid hold upon John, and bound him in prison for Herodias' sake, his brother Philip's wife.** V. 18. **For John had said unto Herod, It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother's wife.** V. 19. **Therefore Herodias had a quarrel against him, and would have killed him; but she could not,** v. 20. **for Herod feared John, knowing that he was a just man and an holy, and observed him; and when he heard him, he did many things, and heard him gladly.** Some personal facts concerning Herod and his family are here told. Throughout the passage the name king is applied to him by courtesy only; for Herod was merely tetrarch of Galilee and Perea. He had resided for some time at Machaerus, a strong fortress of the Jews west of the Dead Sea. But he built Tiberias, on the Sea of Galilee, as his capital, fitting it out with all the luxury that he could devise. He had been married to the daughter of King Aretas of Arabia, but had rejected her for the sake of Herodias, then the wife of Philip, Herod's half-brother, not the ethnarch. His philosophy of life might be summed up in the sentence: Let us eat, drink, and be merry, for to-morrow we shall be dead. The saddest incident in his life is that of which the evangelist here gives an account. John the Baptist, with the fearlessness which should characterize every preacher of repentance, had severely reprimanded him for his adulterous union with Herodias, telling him that it was not right, that it was not the proper thing, that it could not be permitted according to the Law of God that he continue in this anti-Scriptural union. "It so came to pass that Herod the king was living in open, well-known offense. For he had the wife of his brother Philip, who was still living, with him as his lawful wife. This was to John a disagreeable business, since he through his preaching was supposed to rebuke all offense and turn the people from it; for that was his calling. Therefore he does what a pious preacher should do, is not concerned about the fact that Herod is a great king, but just as he rebuked other people for their sins and admonished them to abstain from them, thus he rebukes and admonishes Herod also, and says that it is not right for him to have his brother's wife. This displeased Herod very much; and the harlot still more, for she was troubled lest the sermon concerning her bring fruit. For this reason she lay in wait for John and would have liked to kill him, but she could not. Herod also would gladly have done it, but he was afraid, since he saw what testimony and praise John had with everybody. For that reason, since John would not desist from his rebuking and admonishing, he caused him to be arrested and put him in prison, in order that he could no longer call out so openly." [25] Incidentally, Herod, as is the case with many a weak character, felt the influence of the mightier and morally greater mind. Herodias had no scruples of any kind; she was determined, she frankly sought to kill John. But feeble, vacillating Herod was between two fires, the people, on the one hand, esteeming John as a prophet, and Herodias, on the other hand, demanding his death. In the mean time Herod, in more than one instance, gave heed to the words of John, and many a word which he heard from the mouth of this fearless exhorter caused him to hesitate and think twice before committing further lawlessness. Thus matters came to a deadlock, while John was kept in prison at Machaerus.

The birthday festival: V. 21. **And when a convenient day was come, that Herod on his birthday made a supper to his lords, high captains, and chief estates of Galilee;** v. 22. **and when the daughter of the said Herodias came in and danced, and pleased Herod and them that sat with him, the king said unto the damsel, Ask of me whatsoever thou wilt, and I will give it thee.** V. 23. **And he sware unto her, Whatsoever thou shalt ask of me, I will give it thee, unto the half of my kingdom.** V. 24. **And she went forth and said unto her mother, What shall I ask? And she said, The head of John the Baptist.** V. 25. **And she came in straightway with haste unto the king and asked, saying, I will that thou give me by and by in a charger the head of John the Baptist.** Convenient this birthday festival was, coming just at a good, at the right time to agree with the vengeful plans of Herodias, for she still cherished her grudge against John the Baptist. On his birthday Herod must needs celebrate in style, in a manner befitting one who expected soon to bear the title of king, by permission of the Emperor and the Roman Senate. The mighty ones and the rulers of thousands and the first families of Galilee were invited, that is, the state, civil, and military officials, and the socially important persons of Galilee: an imposing gathering for such an important event. The joy of the

25) Luther, 13a, 1162.

festival banquet was at its height, the guests having undoubtedly freely imbibed and being in the condition of semi-intoxication when reason and sense have alike fled, though articulate speech remains. There had probably also been the usual forms of dancing after the Oriental fashion for the amusement of the guests, when a number not on the program was introduced by the wily Herodias. She had trained her own daughter in the voluptuous dances of the dancing girls, and the girl came into the banquet-hall and danced with reckless *abandon* and shamelessness. The dance pleased Herod and those that were reclining about the tables. They had just about reached the condition when such exhibitions were inclined to appeal to them with special force. Herod immediately made an extravagant promise to the girl, encouraging her to name the reward that was to be hers for this dance. And when she, either from exhaustion after the strenuous exercise or in natural hesitation over the offer, was still standing undecided, he added an oath, swearing that she should have her desire, though it aspire to half of his kingdom: a true example of maudlin, amatory generosity, as one commentator calls it. It may be that her mother had instructed her even beforehand what she should ask for, as the account of Matthew implies, though not expressly says, and now she needed a further urging. At any rate, she hurries to her mother, who promptly impresses upon her the need to ask for, and insist upon, only one thing. Whether there was another determining factor or not, Salome, the dancer, was now ready to do her mother's bidding. Without delay and with a quick step, as though the business in hand was the most interesting and joyous in the world, she returns to the banquet-hall. Her words properly indicate the condition of her heart: I want that thou without delay givest me on a platter the head of John the Baptist. Gruesome words from the lips of a young girl, "request proffered with a cool, pert impudence almost outdoing the mother."

The execution: V. 26. **And the king was exceeding sorry; yet for his oath's sake, and for their sakes which sat with him, he would not reject her.** V. 27. **And immediately the king sent an executioner, and commanded his head to be brought; and he went and beheaded him in the prison,** v. 28. **and brought his head in a charger, and gave it to the damsel; and the damsel gave it to her mother.** V. 29. **And when his disciples heard of it, they came and took up his corpse, and laid it in a tomb.** The fact that the wish of Salome could be carried out so rapidly makes it very probable that the banquet was held at Machaerus. When the girl made her gruesome request, there may have been some gasping in the table-round, and Herod himself may have been sobered by the unexpected turn of events. But it was too late, in his opinion, to retract. And there may have been a feeling of relief mingled with his regret and sorrow. But though he was so very sorry, he thought he must keep his words and oaths like a gentleman; for such is the excuse and explanation usually offered. He did not want to break faith with the young lady by slighting her, by treating the matter as a joke. And so the ghastly spectacle was enacted to the bitter end. There was an officer at the king's court who combined in his person the work of a courier, police officer, and executioner. To him the king's command went to furnish the head of John the Baptist. And, the execution having been performed in prison, the head of John was brought on a platter, as by the request of the dancer, and she, having formally received it, brought it to her mother. There was nothing for the disciples of John to do but to come and lay his body into a grave, mourning bitterly meanwhile the untimely end of one of the greatest prophets that ever spoke the Word of God.

"What here is related of the court and court-life of King Herod is a faithful picture of the world, of the life of the world, and of the lust of the world. The smooth, pliant children of the world are for the most part, even when they pretend to be honorable, what Herod and Herodias were, harlots and adulterers, and if not murderers, yet thieves, deceivers, perjurers, etc. But the chief sin of the world is this, that she will not listen to admonition, that she spurns the Word of God, and is angry against those that warn her against destruction and perdition. Wherever the world, even the apparently decent, cultured, fashionable world, celebrates her festivals, there the delights of feasting, of reveling and drunkenness, are indulged in, there one finds swearing, blaspheming, cursing, there gambling and dancing and rioting are the order of the day, and wine and passion inflame heart and mind. There a dissolute, godless conduct is in evidence, the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, the pride of life. And the end of the wild delight and joy is often murder, the shedding of blood, and other great shame and vice." 26) On the other hand, there is a lesson for the faithful believers in this story. "Therefore let no one have a terror concerning suffering and cross. Let no one envy the persecutors of the Gospel that they are enjoying honors, are great and mighty. For cross and suffering is the only way by which thou shalt come to the heritage and the kingdom of Christ; and all saints, and Christ Himself, have gone this way. Who, then, would be terrorized and complain about it? And it will be seen how quickly the change will come for the tyrants, that their suffering will come upon them in due time and finally last in eternity. From this may God mercifully keep us, and rather let us, with the

26) Stoeckhardt, *Biblische Geschichte des Neuen Testaments*, 121.

sainted John the Baptist, suffer all manner of ignominy and disgrace, that we may but come to the kingdom of God; as our Lord Christ says that it is appointed to us, as to Him, cross and suffering." 27)

The return of the apostles: V. 30. **And the apostles gathered themselves together unto Jesus, and told Him all things, both what they had done and what they had taught.** V. 31. **And He said unto them, Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place and rest a while; for there were many coming and going, and they had no leisure so much as to eat.** V. 32. **And they departed into a desert place by ship privately.** While the apostles made their first independent preaching-trip, the Lord Himself had not been idle. He had continued His journey in the company of other disciples, and He always had an audience wherever He came. But at the time when Herod had heard of Jesus and had been reminded of that unpleasant incident in his life, the apostles returned to their Master. As they had gone out two by two, so they now came together from various directions once more. They reported on all their work, especially also upon their preaching. Note: They were weary from the arduous labor which the task of preaching and the accompanying pastoral work involves, and the fact that Herod had deigned to take notice, while not a reason for flight, yet may be a secondary consideration to the Lord, not so much on His own account as on account of His disciples. And so He suggested a rest, a vacation, in some place away from the haunts of men, for many people were going to and fro; as one crowd left, another arrived; and the Lord and His disciples did not even have leisure for eating. And so they managed to get away by themselves in a ship, all alone. Here is an instance of the loving care of the Lord for His servants. His solicitude is for their bodies also, lest the strain of continuous work make them unfit for the greatest work of all, that of preaching the Gospel — a hint to be noted in its real significance by congregations and pastors alike.

Feeding of Five Thousand Men.

Mark 6, 33—44.

The eagerness of the people: V. 33. **And the people saw them departing, and many knew Him, and ran afoot thither out of all cities, and outwent them, and came together unto Him.** V. 34. **And Jesus, when He came out, saw much people, and was moved with compassion toward them, because they were as sheep not having a shepherd. And He began to teach them many things.** Jesus actually managed to get away in a boat alone with His disciples; but His embarking was nevertheless witnessed by some people, and His identity was too well known in the district, probably the neighborhood of Bethsaida. Besides, they noted and drew correct conclusions as to the course which they were taking in their boat, and the part of the country toward which they were heading. And the news was rapidly passed along the line. While Jesus, therefore, was slowly sailing across the sea, the multitude, swelled by additional inquisitive people from the cities on the northwest shore, made the trip around the north side of the lake afoot, a distance of some ten miles. They walked very rapidly; they ran together, and came ahead of them; they beat them to their destination. Curiosity, for the most part; what an immense factor in the destiny of individuals and of nations! And so it happened that when Jesus went out of the ship, He saw a great multitude gathered together awaiting Him. He did not stop to analyze the motives that might have prompted these people to come out into the uninhabited country; His Savior's heart felt only the deepest pity for them. They were as sheep without shepherds. In all the synagogs of Galilee there were rabbis and scribes, but the food which they supplied to their congregations was a diluted pap and treacle of the matter which the Jerusalem schools were teaching the young theologians. The people were in a state of greatest spiritual neglect. And so the great Friend of sinners forgot His own weariness, His urgent need of rest, and He began a long sermon to them, He taught them many things, things that pertained to their salvation.

Testing the disciples: V. 35. **And when the day was now far spent, His disciples came unto Him and said, This is a desert place, and now the time is far passed.** V. 36. **Send them away that they may go into the country round about and into the villages and buy themselves bread; for they have nothing to eat.** V. 37. **He answered and said unto them, Give ye them to eat. And they say unto Him, Shall we go and buy two hundred pennyworth of bread, and give them to eat?** V. 38. **He saith unto them, How many loaves have ye? Go and see. And when they knew, they say, Five, and two fishes.** In this story, as in many others, the Holy Spirit has permitted the evangelist to record such parts of the conversation as he remembered. The hour had advanced very far, it was late in the day, when the disciples thought it their duty to interfere and to remind the Master of the necessity of taking care of the body also. There is a certain amount of impatience contained in the address to Jesus: The place is uninhabited, and the hour is advanced. He should dismiss them; they could go to the farmhouses and the little villages situated within a radius of a few miles and buy themselves something to eat. Jesus takes the opportunity of testing their trust in His ability to help in this emergency. He urges them to take care of the unbidden guests; by

27) Luther, 13a, 1167.

skilful questioning He brings out the fact that they have been figuring the number of loaves that might be bought for two hundred denarii (between thirty-three and thirty-four dollars), that they have found the provisions on hand to amount to five loaves of bread and two fish. The concern of the disciples at the inquiry of Jesus is illuminating as showing the weakness of their faith.

The feeding: V. 39. **And He commanded them to make all sit down by companies upon the green grass.** V. 40. **And they sat down in ranks, by hundreds and by fifties.** V. 41. **And when He had taken the five loaves and the two fishes, He looked up to heaven, and blessed, and brake the loaves, and gave them to His disciples to set before them; and the two fishes divided He among them all.** V. 42. **And they did all eat and were filled.** V. 43. **And they took up twelve baskets full of the fragments, and of the fishes.** V. 44. **And they that did eat of the loaves were about five thousand men.** Nothing could be more expressive than the contrast afforded here between the helpless puttering of the disciples and the cool, majestic bearing of Christ in taking charge of the situation. He had the disciples give orders that all should recline on the grass in orderly groups, for just at this place there was a meadow near the shore of the lake. And they sat down in groups as in garden squares, as orderly as flowers planted in rows — a fine bit of vivid description. Then Jesus, taking the five loaves and the two fishes, and having looked up to heaven, spoke the blessing upon the food. Note: He broke the bread and passed it on for distribution; He divided the fishes and had them taken to all in a similar way; under His hands the amount of food grew. The miracle is mentioned by all four evangelists, and was one that could not be counterfeited, a secret supply being out of the question. It is a full proof for the divinity of Christ. All ate, and all had enough to eat. And not only that: when the fragments were gathered into the large carrying baskets used by the people of Palestine, twelve of these were filled. And the number of those that had eaten is expressly stated, it being so easy to count them as they sat in groups: five thousand men, without women and children.

Christ Walking on the Sea and His Return to Galilee. Mark 6, 45—56.

The dismissal of the disciples and the people: V. 45. **And straightway He constrained His disciples to get into a ship, and to go to the other side before unto Bethsaida, while He sent away the people.** V. 46. **And when He had sent them away, He departed into a mountain to pray.** He constrained, He urged, He almost forced His disciples to embark into their boat again. They were loath to leave after this glorious exhibition of divine power, and they may have been truly solicitous for His welfare in the face of the unremitting labor which He was performing. But His will prevailed; they must try to cross over the lake to Bethsaida, probably that on the northwest shore of the sea. His next task was to dismiss the people, who may have been just as unwilling to go, as John reports, but were also sent home. When the majesty of His divinity shone through His mortal frame, then there was no questioning Christ's power, and there was no denying Him obedience. And now, being all alone, Jesus took the opportunity to pray to His heavenly Father. On the hill overlooking the lake, in the darkness and loneliness, He poured out His heart and obtained new strength from above. In many a difficult position, in many a hard problem, before many a bitter experience, the best way, the surest method of getting the necessary strength is to bring it to the Lord in prayer.

Jesus walking on the sea: V. 47. **And when even was come, the ship was in the midst of the sea, and He alone on the land.** V. 48. **And He saw them toiling in rowing; for the wind was contrary unto them. And about the fourth watch of the night He cometh unto them, walking upon the sea, and would have passed by them.** V. 49. **But when they saw Him walking upon the sea, they supposed it had been a spirit, and cried out;** v. 50. **for they all saw Him and were troubled. And immediately He talked with them and saith unto them, Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid.** V. 51. **And He went up unto them into the ship; and the wind ceased. And they were sore amazed in themselves beyond measure, and wondered.** V. 52. **For they considered not the miracle of the loaves; for their heart was hardened.** In the late afternoon the disciples had left the eastern shore, and when night came on, they had not yet crossed the lake, for they were obliged to battle with contrary winds. And He alone was on the land. He knew their plight; He was with them every inch of the way; but He did nothing to help them. It is often good for the believers to be buffeted by adverse winds of life. It is only by overcoming difficulties and by conquering in the hard places that Christian character is formed. Until the fourth watch of the night, according to Roman reckoning, between three o'clock in the morning and sunrise, He prayed, although the eye of His omniscience and the reassurance of His omnipresence was with them during all these hours. But now He came walking on the water as man otherwise steps along on dry land, He, the Master of all creation, that can make all things serve His will. He was about to pass by the boat, when the disciples saw Him. And then ensued a time of panic. Superstition, the fear of ghosts and specters, was still living in their hearts. And so the unwonted appearance of a human figure striding along over the waves set them to crying and wonder-

ing and fearing. But His voice stayed the panic and slowly brought confidence into their hearts. He then climbed over the side of the boat into their midst, whereupon the wind immediately stopped. The effect of this double miracle on the disciples, wrought up as they had been by their fear, was such as to bring them almost out of their senses for astonishment. For, as the evangelist here confesses, doubtless at the suggestion of Peter, the miracle of the loaves had not been understood by them, it had not entered into their hearts, its meaning had escaped them, and their hearts were still far from being in a condition to accept, at their right value, the miracles of the Lord. In like manner, the great deeds of the Lord which pass review before us in Scriptures often do not make the impression upon our hearts that they should; but the Savior has much patience with us, renewing and repeating His teaching until we understand.

New work for the Lord: V. 53. **And when they had passed over, they came into the land of Gennesaret, and drew to the shore.** V. 54. **And when they were come out of the ship, straightway they knew Him.** V. 55. **And ran through that whole region round about, and began to carry about in beds those that were sick, where they heard He was.** V. 56. **And whithersoever He entered, into villages, or cities, or country, they laid the sick in the streets, and besought Him that they might touch if it were but the border of His garment; and as many as touched Him were made whole.** On the western shore of the lake there was a region, Gennesaret, "the garden of the prince," or the "garden of fertility," a rich and beautiful country. Here they cast anchor or fastened their boat. But no sooner had Jesus stepped to the shore than He was recognized by some of the people living in that neighborhood, and there was a repetition of former experiences. They ran throughout the region and spread the news of His coming. And now the sick were brought to Him. Also, whether He walked along city streets or country lanes, the relatives of the sick, undiscouraged and unwearied, brought their unfortunate ones with the plea that they might touch but the border of His garment. As once before, chapter 3, 10, He permitted the mere touch of His garment to work the miracle of healing. The people were worked up to the highest pitch of excitement at this time, which may have been augmented by the news of the miraculous feeding brought back by those that had been present upon that occasion. His sympathy and mercy were tireless in the interest of suffering humanity, but He was always concerned most about their souls, which He fed with the bread of life unto salvation.

Summary. *Jesus makes a visit to Nazareth, sends out the twelve apostles, while His fame spreads to Herod, who had caused the execution of John the Baptist; He seeks rest, but is prevented by a great multitude of five thousand, whom He feeds in the wilderness; He walks on the sea and performs many miracles of healing in the region of Gennesaret.*

CHAPTER 7.

Concerning Ceremonial Washings.

Mark 7, 1—13.

The Pharisees find fault: V. 1. **Then came together unto Him the Pharisees and certain of the scribes, which came from Jerusalem.** V. 2. **And when they saw some of His disciples eat bread with defiled, that is to say, with unwashen, hands, they found fault.** V. 3. **For the Pharisees and all the Jews, except they wash their hands oft, eat not, holding the tradition of the elders.** V. 4. **And when they come from the market, except they wash, they eat not. And many other things there be which they have received to hold, as the washing of cups, and pots, brazen vessels, and of tables.** V. 5. **Then the Pharisees and scribes asked Him, Why walk not Thy disciples according to the tradition of the elders, but eat bread with unwashen hands?** An instance of typical pharisaic pedantry, of deliberate, unwarranted faultfinding. Jesus had returned to Capernaum for a few days after the exciting and wearying experiences of a strenuous week. Here He finds a company of His enemies assembled; the contrast between the Lord's popularity during the last few days and the hostility of the Jewish religious leaders is brought out very strongly. It may be that this delegation of Pharisees and scribes was the same one that was dogging Christ's footsteps since the casting out of devils, chapter 3, 22; or the authorities may have sent down even more learned and disputatious men than at first, as they were learning to respect the clear arguments and the sharp tongue of the Galilean Rabbi. The purpose of their coming was frankly not to hear the Word of Life, but to provoke disputes. Their opportunity came very soon. They saw some of Christ's disciples eat with common, with unwashed hands. This was their cue for an attack upon Jesus. Note: Not the question of sanitation caused them concern, but one which they considered affecting the standing of a believing Jew in the sight of God. Mark explains the difficulty on account of his Roman readers. It was the custom of the Pharisees and of all the strict Jews that observed the traditions of the elders religiously

to perform certain washings, especially before partaking of food. The original purpose of this precept had undoubtedly been to promote sanitary conditions among the Jews, a fact which often shielded them against epidemics. But the Pharisees and elders at the time of Jesus emphasized such outward observances to the detriment and exclusion of the more important things, the factors of real religion. They washed their hands most diligently before eating, with their fists, to insure thoroughness or to prevent the soiling of one hand from the palm of the other. They were careful, at the same time, to have the washing extend at least to the wrist, according to others to the elbow. It must be vigorous and thorough, and be done just so, otherwise a person became guilty of not clinging firmly to the tradition of the elders, a most heinous offense in the sight of the orthodox Pharisee. When coming back from market especially, where they might unknowingly have touched something unclean, the strict Jews were most inexorable and oppressive in their demands for cleanliness, a thorough washing of the hands and arms, if not of the whole body, being a prime requisite at that time. This care had become so excessive that it extended to the dishes and the furniture of the house as a matter of Levitical purification. They had received, and adhered most firmly to, the tradition regarding the washing of drinking-cups, of wooden and brazen vessels, and even of couches or sofas. The word used here for utensils of brass is really a Latin word, meaning a Roman measure equal to about 1½ pints. Earthen vessels are not mentioned, since they had to be broken if defiled, Lev. 15, 12. Thus the whole life of the Jews, down to the most minute performances of every-day life, was governed by such laws and precepts. Having explained the Jewish custom, Mark returns to his story. The Pharisees attack Jesus, finding fault both with His disciples and therefore with Him for transgressing the traditions of the elders, which were thus represented as just as sacred and inviolable as the commandments of God.

The Lord's answer: V. 6. **He answered and said unto them, Well hath Esaias prophesied of you hypocrites, as it is written, This people honoreth Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me.** V. 7. **Howbeit in vain do they worship Me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.** V. 8. **For laying aside the commandments of God, ye hold the tradition of men, as the washing of pots and cups; and many other such like things ye do.** In cases of weakness and lack of understanding the Lord was always willing to employ a great deal of patience, but in the case of the Pharisees, where utter hardness of heart was united with supercilious haughtiness and unwillingness to be taught, Jesus used the weapons of invective and sarcasm, and sometimes of bitter denunciation. He applies a double prophecy of Isaiah to them, chapter 29, 13. With their lips they honored the Lord, endless prayers with babbling repetition were their strong suit, but their heart was altogether away, at a great distance from Him. They were proud of their outward observance of the precepts of both the Law and of the tradition of the elders, believing that this was true service of God. But vain is such worship, the Lord informs them, since they teach and insist upon the doctrines of men. In accordance with this prophecy, Jesus fitly calls them hypocrites, actors of a kind, that go through the routine of their part, say their prayers, and make the appropriate gestures by rote, but who seldom or never can reach the spontaneous expression of one that speaks and acts out of the fulness of his heart. Like them, all people that place the commandments of men on the same level with God's holy Law and for the sake of their precepts change and even set aside the eternal Word of God, are hypocrites, whose heart is far from God, who do not give the Lord their heart, for otherwise they would have the proper reverence for the same. The rebuke of Jesus exactly strikes the sore spot: they put aside the command of God and cling to the tradition of men.

The attack of Christ: V. 9. **And He said unto them, Full well ye reject the command of God, that ye may keep your own tradition.** V. 10. **For Moses said, Honor thy father and thy mother; and, Whoso curseth father and mother, let him die the death.** V. 11. **But ye say, If a man shall say to his father or mother, It is Corban, that is to say, a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me, he shall be free.** V. 12. **And ye suffer him no more to do aught for his father or his mother;** v. 13. **making the Word of God of none effect through your tradition which ye have delivered; and many such like things do ye.** Having defended Himself successfully and silenced His detractors, the Lord now assumes the offensive. He employs pointed sarcasm: It is a fine way in which you frustrate the commandment of God that your tradition may be upheld! The Pharisees not only placed the precepts of tradition on the same level with those of God, but by their peculiar emphasis upon them actually set the latter aside. An example of this irreverent and blasphemous method: setting aside the Fourth Commandment for the sake of a probable sacrifice. God's Law is clear on the relation of children to parents, Ex. 20, 12; Deut. 5, 16, also regarding the punishment of those that disregard the rights of the parents, Ex. 21, 17; Lev. 20, 9. He had placed the service to parents next to that of Himself. But the Pharisees took advantage of the fact that God had sanctioned free-will offerings or sacrifices. They taught: If a man says to his father or his mother, Corban, that is, a free-will gift, let that be what you would have from me for your benefit or help. The

final understanding of the expression came to be: if a son or daughter took the money, the goods, the earnings, the means, with which he could and should assist his poor and needy parents, and dedicated it to God as a sacrifice or free-will offering for the Temple, he did well. The Pharisees held the mere making of such a vow, the mere use of the expression Corban, for a service done to God, which could very well take precedence of the service due to parents. In doing so, they set aside even the plain truth of the Old Testament, Prov. 28, 24. The result of such teaching soon became evident: The honor due to parents was forgotten, the fact that they were God's substitutes was disregarded. Thus they literally set at naught the Word of God, and such instances could be multiplied. That was Christ's attack, one that showed the real relation of values.

Christ's Denunciation of the Pharisees.

Mark 7, 14—23.

Addressing the people: V. 14. **And when He had called all the people unto Him, He said unto them, Hearken unto Me, every one of you, and understand:** v. 15. **There is nothing from without a man that, entering into him, can defile him; but the things which come out of him, those are they that defile the man.** V. 16. **If any man have ears to hear, let him hear.** The question which had been broached by the Pharisees was by no means unimportant, if considered from the right angle and in the right connection. And Christ did not intend to be misunderstood by the people that had been interested witnesses of the encounter. Levitical impurity, ceremonial washings, they no longer have any value in the New Testament. But of far greater importance is spiritual impurity, whose nature a person should well understand, in order to strike at the root of the matter and stop the inclinations toward evil at the beginning. So Christ turns directly to the people; He calls the crowd to Him and addresses them all on this topic; He emphasizes the necessity of listening intently and intelligently, in order that they might understand. It is a sweeping statement: There is nothing outside of a person which may touch him or enter into him that can make him unclean, that will make him unfit for serving the Lord and taking part in His service. Christian worship and service is in no way dependent upon the outward appearance or habits of a person, whether he wears broadcloth or overalls, whether he washes his hands before meals or not, whether he eats certain foods or not. All these things are irrelevant and immaterial, so far as actual worshiping of the Lord is concerned. They may be watched for hygienic and sanitary reasons, just as we have good and laudable customs regarding our appearance at the house of God; but they do not concern the religion of a man, his relation to his God. But, Christ says, the things which come forth from the man, they are apt to make him unclean, they may disturb the confidence of the Lord in him, they may cause the relation between him and his God to be severed. It is an important point that the Lord here makes, and He wants to impress it upon His hearers.

The explanation to the disciples: V. 17. **And when He was entered into the house from the people, His disciples asked Him concerning the parable.** V. 18. **And He saith unto them, Are ye so without understanding also? Do ye not perceive that whatsoever thing from without entereth into the man, it cannot defile him;** v. 19. **because it entereth not into his heart, but into the belly, and goeth out into the draught, purging all meats?** V. 20. **And He said, That which cometh out of the man, that defileth the man.** V. 21. **For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders,** v. 22. **thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness:** v. 23. **all these evil things come from within, and defile the man.** The disciples had gotten into the habit of talking over the public teaching of the Lord, in order to find its true meaning, to get the full understanding. Here also they waited until Jesus came home with them, to the place where He, and, perhaps, they all were lodging at that time. Here they asked Him concerning this saying, which they call a parable, that is, in this case, an obscure saying, a comparison hard to understand. The evangelist notes the full speech of Jesus, in which He chode their lack of spiritual insight. Their stupidity is purposely made prominent, in order to bring out their need of instruction. Jesus here extends the saying, which before had touched only upon the moral sphere of man's life, in order to make His meaning still plainer. That which enters into the body from without, in the shape of food, cannot make him unclean morally or spiritually, it cannot affect the condition of his heart before God. Foods merely, generally speaking, influence the physical side of man. They are taken into the stomach, and finally the waste matter is thrown out by the body, thus actually purging the body of matter which might make him unclean. Thus Christ incidentally extended His saying concerning ceremonial uncleanness to abolishing the distinction maintained in the Old Testament concerning the cleanness and uncleanness of various foods. He practically declared all meats to be clean; the distinction which the Jews had so rigidly and rigorously observed was hereby abrogated for the New Testament.

But the lesson which Christ wanted to teach lay deeper; the physical side of the process touched upon by Him was only a side issue. That upon which all depends is the right atti-

tude, the proper understanding of the things that go out from the body. From inside, from the heart, which is full of evil and inclined toward all evil by nature, come thoughts, desires, words, actions that defile the man. God looks into the heart. It is not only the actual sin which is culpable in His sight, but the very thoughts are bad, wrong, sinful before Him. And they all live in the heart: adulteries, open disruptions of the marriage-rights; thefts, the unlawful desire and gain of the neighbor's goods; murders, any thoughts or acts that make the neighbor's life unpleasant or destroy it; fornications, actual severing of the marriage-tie; covetousnesses, striving after goods that belong to the neighbor by God's gift or permission; wickednesses, all forms of evil dispositions; fraud, by which people try to get the best of their neighbor; debauchery, in which men serve their own bodies in a manner unbecoming Christians and human beings; an evil eye, jealousy, which begrudges the other person everything good; blasphemy, by which God is mocked and all that is holy is defiled; presumption, the lifting of one's self above the neighbor; lack of knowledge, moral foolishness. The seed, the germ of all these sins, lies in the heart of every man by nature, only awaiting the occasion when it will come forth and work havoc. These are the things that defile a person, but not any form of the so-called Levitical or ceremonial uncleanness. A Christian has need to watch over his heart unceasingly, lest any of these evil seeds sprout and grow beyond all control.

The Syrophenician Woman. Mark 7, 24—30.

A journey to the North: V. 24. **And from thence He arose and went into the borders of Tyre and Sidon, and entered into an house, and would have no man know it. But He could not be hid;** v. 25. **for a certain woman, whose young daughter had an unclean spirit, heard of Him, and came and fell at His feet.** V. 26. **The woman was a Greek, a Syrophenician by nation; and she besought Him that He would cast forth the devil out of her daughter.** Since it was apparently impossible to find rest and leisure for connected teaching in the neighborhood of the Sea of Galilee, Jesus arose from there, from the city, Capernaum, where He had had the encounter with the Pharisees. There came a period of wandering far from the usual haunts, of going away with the intention of staying away for some time. Cp. 10, 1. He proceeded into the neighborhood, into the region of Tyre, into the country between Tyre and Sidon. Although the former country of Phenicia, since the conquest by Pompey, belonged to Syria, there was little intercourse between this country and Palestine and little love lost between their inhabitants. Into this country Jesus went with His disciples, not for the purpose of carrying on the labors of His ministry, but to gain time for the necessary intercourse with His disciples, since their theological training was far from complete, as the recent incident showed. He wanted to remain unknown in this distant region. But it was impossible for Him to carry out His program as planned, for His fame had preceded Him, probably by means of the people that had gone down to see Him during His Galilean tour, chapter 3, 8. There was also a caravan road from Galilee, and the news concerning the Galilean Prophet might easily have traveled along with the merchants. He could not remain hidden, though He entered and perhaps stayed for a while in a house of that region. Very soon a woman heard of His presence in the neighborhood who had great need of His help. Though she was a Greek, a Syrophenician by race, she had become acquainted with the hopes and expectations of the Jews, and for her own person had come to the conclusion that this man was the Lord, the Messiah, that had been promised to the Jewish people. Now her young daughter had an unclean, an evil spirit, she was a demoniac, and her mother determined to appeal to Christ for help. To be sure of the identity of Jesus as the true Helper in every trouble, to trust in His willingness to help, and to ask assistance and the fulfilment of every need from Him alone, that is the essence of faithful trust. She came to Jesus, she fell down at His feet in the attitude of worshipful appeal; she pleaded with Him to have sympathy with her and her small daughter, to heal the child of her terrible affliction.

The victory of faith: V. 27. **But Jesus said unto her, Let the children first be filled; for it is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it unto the dogs.** V. 28. **And she answered and said unto Him, Yes, Lord; yet the dogs under the table eat of the children's crumbs.** V. 29. **And He said unto her, For this saying go thy way; the devil is gone out of thy daughter.** V. 30. **And when she was come to her house, she found the devil gone out, and her daughter laid upon the bed.** Mark gives the story in a very brief form, merely indicating the battle which the woman fought in proving herself equal to the test of faith which Jesus laid upon her. Christ was not sent but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, Matt. 15, 24; His personal ministry extended no farther, and He frankly told the woman so. Neither could the impatient interference of the disciples induce Him to change His mind, Matt. 15, 21—28. But the woman's method of attacking Christ and taking hold of His own words in her interest won the day for her. When He told her: Let the children have their food first; it isn't a nice thing to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs, she acknowledged and admitted the truth of that saying without reservation. She stood the blow in a splendid manner, as Luther says. She was ready to concede

to the Jews the right of being children of God, His chosen nation. But she marked well that Jesus used the word that was usually applied to the privileged house-dogs, that had the right to gather up the crumbs under the table. Upon this word she pounces, to that she clings: Yes, Lord. In spite of the fact that He had apparently rejected her and her petition, though there seemed no ray of hope in His manner nor in His words, she found the one place where He had left an opening: And yet the little house-dogs under the table eat of the crumbs of the children; if Thou thinkest the comparison fits, Lord, I do not question it; rather do I count myself lucky that this word includes a promise for me, the promise to receive the crumbs which the Jews, in the richness of the ministry being done among them, will never miss. Thus did this heathen woman give evidence of a conquering faith, in overcoming Christ with His own arguments. And Jesus, ever delighted over any show of true trust and faith in Him, gladly yields to her request, for the sake of that word of humble trust, of sublime assurance which she hath spoken. Let her therefore go home happy, for the demon had already gone forth out of her daughter. And so she found the situation when she came to her house: the daughter, whom the evil spirit had formerly tormented and torn in the most excruciating manner, now lying quietly on the couch, with no more indication of her former suffering. Her faith had won the victory. We, who have much more definite promises of the Lord regarding our earthly and spiritual welfare, usually do not show even a fraction of the faith exhibited by the Syrophenician woman. It behooves us to be much more instant in prayer and, above all, much more persevering in our appeals to the grace and mercy of God, no matter what gifts we have in mind. We must learn to conquer the Lord with His own words and promises, then true happiness will be ours both here and hereafter.

Healing of the Deaf-and-Dumb.

Mark 7, 31—37.

The return to Palestine: V. 31. **And again, departing from the coasts of Tyre and Sidon, He came unto the Sea of Galilee, through the midst of the coasts of Decapolis.** V. 32. **And they bring unto Him one that was deaf and had an impediment in His speech; and they beseech Him to put His hand upon him.** The story of this healing is one peculiar to the gospel of Mark. After His sojourn in Syrophenicia, in the region between Tyre and Sidon, Jesus did not take the direct route back to Galilee. It seems, from all accounts, that He went through the borders of Coele-Syria and Upper Galilee, perhaps along the river Leontes, and then came down from the neighborhood of Caesarea-Philippi through Gaulanitis into the region of the Decapolis. Concerning this journey of the Lord, which was perhaps the longest single journey which He made, we know nothing, since none of the evangelists or apostles give accounts of it. But we are undoubtedly not far wrong in saying that He employed the time in instructing His apostles in things which were so necessary for them in their divine calling. It was after Christ's return into the neighborhood of the Sea of Galilee, in the region where, not so very long before, He had healed the demoniac, that they, his relatives or friends, brought to Him a man that was deaf and had a bad impediment in his speech. He may have been able to make sounds and even indicate his wishes to people that watched him closely, but he could not articulate, his tongue was unable to form the words. It was a severe ailment, in which the extent of Satan's power is evident. "For that this poor man is hurt in this manner that he can use neither tongue nor ears, like other people, those are blows and thrusts of the accursed devil. Before the world it may seem, and every one be of the opinion, that they be natural ailments; for the world does not know the devil that he does so much harm, makes the people mad and foolish, inflicts all manner of misfortune upon them, not only in the body, but also in the soul, that they die for terror and sorrow and cannot attain to true joy. But we Christians should deem such defects and infirmities nothing else but blows of the devil; he causes such distress on earth and does damage wherever he can." 28)

The healing: V. 33. **And He took him aside from the multitude, and put His fingers into his ears, and He spit, and touched his tongue;** v. 34. **and looking up to heaven, He sighed, and saith unto him, Ephphatha, that is, Be opened.** V. 35. **And straightway his ears were opened, and the string of his tongue was loosed, and he spake plain.** V. 36. **And He charged them that they should tell no man; but the more He charged them, so much the more a great deal they published it;** v. 37. **and were beyond measure astonished, saying, He hath done all things well: He maketh both the deaf to hear, and the dumb to speak.** Mark gives a very circumstantial account of the healing, relating every detail, to let the healing sympathy and power of the Lord stand out all the more beautifully. For reasons which are not divulged, Jesus withdrew the sick man from the crowd. Due to his malady, the poor man was cut off almost entirely from communication with his fellow-men and had to be taken by the hand. This act of Jesus, whom the man could see, served to awaken his attention, to make him mark closely all that Jesus did with him, for only through signs could Jesus communicate with him. The Lord then put one finger of His right hand into one of

28) Luther, 13a, 838.

the man's ears, and one of the left hand into the other. The deafness was the most deep-seated evil; by touching the atrophied organs, the Lord transmitted to them His healing power. He next moistened His finger at His mouth and touched the tongue of the sick man. The tongue and the inner ears were the diseased organs. "He refers especially to these two members, ears and tongue; for the kingdom of Christ is based upon the Word, which cannot otherwise be grasped or understood but through these two members, ears and tongue, and it reigns only through the Word and faith in the hearts of men. The ears take hold of the Word, and the heart believes it; but the tongue speaks and confesses, as the heart believes. Therefore if the tongue and the ears are removed, there is no noticeable difference between the kingdom of Christ and the world. . . . With us, thanks to God, the tongue has gotten so far that we speak plainly, for there are everywhere pious people that hear the Word of God with desire. But aside from this there is also great ingratitude and terrible contempt for the Word of God, yea, secret persecution and secret suffering. . . . That is an indication that the Word of God is despised and that people are secretly hostile to it; as we see that things usually go: where the Word is openly persecuted, there it insists on being; but where it is free and in open use, there people do not want it." 29) After these preparatory acts Jesus looked up to heaven and sighed. He felt the deepest sympathy for the unfortunate sufferer; His miracles never degenerated into a mere business. Incidentally, we see that the works of healing meant a great mental strain for Christ. And at last He spoke the Aramaic word: Ephphatha, which Mark translates for his readers: Be opened. The result: The hearings, the instruments of hearing, the ears, were opened, were put into commission again, and the fetters that bound his tongue were loosed; whereas he could formerly merely make sounds, he could now articulate distinctly and speak plainly. "The phrase used by Mark is one often used in the magical texts, and shows that the writer of the gospel supposed that in this miracle demoniac fetters were broken and a work of Satan undone." 30)

Here also the sequel was much as in other cases: Jesus impressed upon them that they should not tell of the miracle. He did not want to be drawn into another ministry of healing. But they did just the opposite: so much the more, a great deal (double comparative), superabundantly, they proclaimed the miracle. For beyond all description they were astonished, in the highest degree they were overwhelmed, saying: Well has He made everything. It seems that they had not only this miracle in mind, but the former one as well, which by Christ's own arrangement had been published so widely. "Therefore let us remember, and take heed of, this miracle, and follow the example of the pious people that praise Christ the Lord here that He had made all things well, that He makes the deaf to hear and the dumb to speak. This He does, as stated before, forever within the Christian Church, by means of the Sacraments and through the public Word, that the ears of the deaf are opened, and that the dumb are made to speak. Through these means, and through nothing else, the Holy Spirit wants to perform His work in us. Mark that well and cling to it with greater diligence; for that is the nearest and surest way that our ears may be opened and our tongues loosed, and we be saved. May our dear Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, grant us this!" 31)

Summary. *Jesus answers an attack of the Pharisees concerning ceremonial washing, denounces them for their disregard of the Word of God, explains moral cleanness, heals the daughter of the Syrophenician woman, and opens the ears of the deaf-mute.*

29) Luther, 11, 1529. 1533.

30) Cobern, *The New Archeological Discoveries*, 650.

31) Luther, 13a, 845.

THE MODE OF BAPTISM.

The Lutheran Church has always held that it is a matter of indifference, so far as the command of God is concerned, and therefore a point of Christian liberty, whether Baptism is performed by immersion or dipping, by sprinkling, by pouring, or by washing, the essential thing being the application of water, not the form of this application. Other church bodies are very narrow in this respect, the Greek Catholic Church maintaining that a threefold immersion is necessary, and the Baptist and Campbellite churches insisting that immersion it must be, at all costs.

In deciding this question, it would obviously be useless to refer to the New Testament passages in which the Sacrament of Baptism is instituted, for there we gain no explanation of the method used by Christ and the apostles, and experience has shown how foolish it is to draw conclusions from attending circumstances about which we know little or nothing. The historical accounts, however, have some value. For instance, the apostles, on the Day of Pentecost, would have had neither time nor the water necessary to immerse the three thousand that were converted by the sermon of Peter, Acts 2, 41. Also, the number of rivers in which the eunuch of Queen Candace of Ethiopia might have been immersed by Philip can easily be counted by an infant of a day, for there are none.

But a better method to get a clear understanding of the form of Baptism is to take the use of the word baptize in Scriptures, in passages where it is used in its ordinary meaning, where the Sacrament is not spoken of. Verse 4,

in the chapter above, is a passage illustrating such use. That cups and pots were immersed in ceremonial washing, might still be plausible, but that the couches of the dining-room were also dipped in water every day, is clearly out of the question. The prescribed form of ceremonial purification, which was the method in common use, was the sprinkling of consecrated water. The baptism of the children of Israel, 1 Cor. 10, 2, was not by immersion, as was that of the Egyptians, but by sprinkling. The Bible throughout prefers sprinkling to immersion as a symbol of cleansing, Is. 52, 15; Ezek. 36, 25. In Joel 2, 28 pouring, not immersion, is the figure employed. In fulfilment of this prophecy, the apostles, on Pentecost Day, were baptized with the Holy Ghost, Acts 1, 5; 2, 3. Cp. Acts 2, 41; 10, 44—48; 16, 32—35; 8, 38.[32])

The fact that the mode of Baptism was not fixed by Christ or by His apostles, but that this was left open to the Christian Church, is substantiated also by the testimony of history. In a book which is reckoned with those of the Apostolic Fathers, called *The Teaching of the Twelve*, which dates not later than the middle of the second century, the passage occurs: "If you have not living water, baptize into other water; and if you cannot baptize in cold water, do so in warm; but if you have neither, then pour out water three times on the head in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." Walafrid Strabo, a German monk and writer (808—849), tells us that St. Lawrence, a Roman deacon who suffered martyrdom in the persecution of Valerian about 258, baptized one of his executioners with a pitcher of water, by pouring the water on the man's head. The cases recorded in history might be multiplied indefinitely and brought forward to the time of the Reformation. But the conclusion which we must reach, after comparing all evidence, is that, while immersion was the rule for baptisms in the post-apostolic age, other modes of Baptism have always been in use in the Church, and any one of them may be employed, so long as the application of water with the appropriate formula, as instituted by Christ, is made.[33])

32) *Theol. Quart.*, 20 (1916), 151—159.

33) *Theol. Quart.*, 18 (1914), 67—77.

CHAPTER 8.

Feeding Four Thousand Men. Mark 8, 1—9.

The great need of the people: V. 1. **In those days, the multitude being very great, and having nothing to eat, Jesus called His disciples unto Him, and saith unto them, v. 2. I have compassion on the multitude, because they have now been with Me three days, and have nothing to eat; v. 3. and if I send them away fasting to their own houses, they will faint by the way; for divers of them came from far.** Jesus was still in the region of the Decapolis, where He had healed the deaf-mute. It may have been due partly to the excitement over this miracle, partly to the preliminary work of the former demoniac, that the multitudes from these cities and their vicinity that swarmed to Jesus were continually on the increase. Again, as on previous occasions, much people was present. Some of them may have provided lunch for a day or two, but just now they had nothing to eat; they were in actual need of food. Jesus had not been idle during these days. Discourses on the kingdom of God alternated with miracles of mercy. The people had remained during all this time; in this case they were from the border country which was predominantly heathen, whereas in the former case He had had Galileans to deal with. There were always some hearts that were opened to the Gospel, and thus the compassion of Christ was not without reward.

But here was an emergency which threatened to become serious. Jesus determined to test His disciples, as once before, to see if they now had sufficient trust in His almighty power to help. Calling them to Him, He lays the situation before them. He had the deepest compassion on the people, since their perseverance and eagerness to hear and see Him had brought them into this unpleasant plight. The sympathy of the Redeemer had been enlisted, His heart went out to them, for He knew if He should dismiss them without food, many of them would be utterly exhausted and suffer severely with excessive fatigue, many of them having come from some distance. "See what a kind Christ we have, who cares also that He may preserve our disgraceful body. Here hope may revive and a person, through these words of Christ, be consoled, as He says: They lie there and wait for Me, even to the third day, so I must also give them enough. There you see that all who diligently adhere to the Word of God are fed by God Himself; for that is the manner and power of faith, which flows from the Word of God alone. Therefore, dear friends, let us finally begin to believe; for only unbelief is the cause of all sin and vice that are now spreading in all stations. Why is it that there are everywhere so many foolish women and scoundrels, also so many land-swindlers, thieves, robbers, usurers, murderers, and sellers of incumbencies? All this follows unbelief. For such people judge only according to human reason; but reason judges according to that which it sees; and what it cannot see it does not like to understand; therefore, since it does not place its trust in God by faith, it must despair in itself, and thus produce knaves and scoundrels. Note: Thus it goes where the people let their reason reign instead of faith....

Such counseling and talking with the disciples is done in the first place for this reason, that the heart and the thoughts be revealed. For it cannot remain hidden and lie secret in His heart that He has compassion on the people, but it must be brought to the light of day that it may be seen and heard, and we learn to believe that we have the same Christ that is cordially concerned about our distress, also that of the body, and who always shows the words: I have compassion on the multitude, which are written in His heart with living letters, also in deed and in work. And He would also like to have us know this and hear the Word of the Gospel in such a way as though He were still talking to us in this hour and every day, whenever we feel our trouble, yea, long before we begin to complain concerning it. For He still is and will ever remain the same Christ, and He has the same heart, thoughts, and words toward us, that He was and had at that time, and neither yesterday nor ever has He changed, nor will He become a different Christ to-day or to-morrow. Thus there stands here a picture or board on which the depth of His heart is painted, for He is a faithful, merciful Lord, whom the knowledge of our trouble affects deeply, and He looks more deeply into it than we dare to pray or bring before Him. Woe upon the disgrace of our disagreeable unbelief, that we hear and see these things and yet find it so difficult to trust in Him!" 34)

The miracle: V. 4. **And His disciples answered Him, From whence can a man satisfy these men with bread here in the wilderness?** V. 5. **And He asked them, How many loaves have ye? And they said, Seven.** V. 6. **And He commanded the people to sit down on the ground; and He took the seven loaves, and gave thanks, and brake, and gave to His disciples to set before them; and they did set them before the people.** V. 7. **And they had a few small fishes; and He blessed, and commanded to set them also before them.** V. 8. **So they did eat and were filled; and they took up of the broken meat that was left seven baskets.** V. 9. **And they that had eaten were about four thousand; and He sent them away.** The disciples again failed in the test proposed to them by the Lord, whether from diffidence or from hardness of heart cannot be determined. Instead of reminding Him in joyful faith of the former feeding at a place only a few miles away, they begin to cast about for a solution of the difficulty, in utter helplessness: Whence will any one find it possible, here in the wilderness, to supply all these men with bread? There were, in this case, not even villages or towns within easy reach where supplies might be gotten. It is a question which has been repeated in countless variations since that time. "The apostles also worry, but in a far different way than Christ; they say: Whence can we obtain bread here in the wilderness to satisfy them? That is worrying; but this worrying does not help the matter. But, on the other hand, when Christ takes up the matter of the people and plans about getting them something to eat, though there are only seven loaves there and a little fish, it still proves sufficient for four thousand men, and seven baskets of fragments remain. . . . How is it, then, that we, who are all Christians or want to be considered such, do not follow this example, neither comfort ourselves with our fulness and surplus, but are terrorized on account of want, and begin to worry on its account? For if we adhere to the Word of God diligently and faithfully, there will be no want; Christ will take care of us, and it must follow that we shall have enough to eat. For it does not depend upon how much or how little we have, but upon His blessing. If He adds that to the small store that thou hast, this will not only not dissolve, but on account of His blessing there will be added to it and be more there than in the beginning." 35) In this case the disciples had a supply of seven loaves, very likely the bread for their own use. Jesus now took charge of the banquet which He wanted to prepare for the multitude. He bade them all cast themselves down on the ground. The inviting grass of the former miracle seems to have been absent in this case. He then proceeded as before. Taking the seven loaves and having spoken a blessing over them, He broke them and gave them to His disciples to distribute among the people. Note: Christ never began a meal without remembering the thanks due to the Giver of all good gifts and asking His blessing upon the food. "Here He teaches first that we should use what God gives us, no matter how little it is, and accept it with thanksgiving, and know that Christ also wants to bless it that it may prosper and suffice, yea, even grow under our hands; for that is well-pleasing to Him when His gifts are acknowledged and thanks returned for them, and He adds His blessing that this prospers better and reaches farther than great riches and superfluous goods of the unbelievers, as also the Scripture says, Ps. 37, 16; Prov. 10, 22; 1 Tim. 6, 6. For what have they that possess many and great goods without faith and Christ, and what do they gain? They only deprive themselves of God and of His blessing, are idolaters, the captives of mammon, that dare not make use of their own goods nor let others use it, or they do not use it with a good conscience, neither are they happy over the bite that they eat on account of their avarice and bad conscience, in which they have only one thought, to scrape together more and more with all manner of bad deals and schemes, and yet must always be worrying and in danger that

34) Luther, 11, 1371. 1384.

35) Luther, 13a, 786. 787.

they will have no peace before God and the people, must hear and see much and experience things that make their heart sick, in their great possessions and in their own children; and thus they have thrown themselves into the bonds of the devil and pierced themselves through with many sorrows, as the apostle says, from which they cannot escape." 36) As Jesus was breaking the bread and dividing the little fish that had been found among the supplies, the food grew under His hand. As often as the disciples returned for more, so often could He offer it to them, and they, in turn, passed it to the people. So they all partook of the meal, and they all had their fill to eat; not one was obliged to remain hungry, though there were four thousand men that had enjoyed Christ's hospitality. And again the Lord, in the spirit of food conservation which is advocated throughout Scriptures, had the multitude gather up the remainders of the broken pieces, which could well be used for food, and they filled seven large baskets of the kind that were used in that country for carrying large loads on the back. It is not stated whether the people knew the manner in which they were fed on this occasion, nor what effect the knowledge had upon them, if they knew. And even the disciples remained comparatively callous, as the Lord soon had occasion to find out. If people let the constant repetition of the great miracles of Christ in the means of grace deaden their sensibilities, they are working great harm to themselves; the compassion, the mercy, the faithfulness of the Lord is new every morning.

The Leaven of the Pharisees.

Mark 8, 10—21.

Request for a sign from heaven: V. 10. **And straightway He entered into a ship with His disciples, and came into the parts of Dalmanutha.** V. 11. **And the Pharisees came forth, and began to question with Him, seeking of Him a sign from heaven, tempting him.** V. 12. **And He sighed deeply in His spirit and saith, Why doth this generation seek after a sign? Verily I say unto you, There shall no sign be given unto this generation.** V. 13. **And He left them, and, entering into the ship, again departed to the other side.** After the miracle of the feeding Jesus lost no time in further teaching and healing at this place. Without delay He entered the boat with His disciples and crossed the Sea of Galilee into the region of Dalmanutha, in the district of Magdala, Matt. 15, 39. This was a fertile district adjoining that of Gennesaret, and for that reason settled very thickly. Jesus always returned to Galilee for short trips, but the day of mercy for the Galileans had practically come to a close. His ancient enemies had not returned to Jerusalem, to all appearances. For no sooner had He begun the work of His ministry than they came out, probably from Capernaum. They here deliberately began a dispute, they tried to force the issue, they tempted Him. Their object was to get Him to do or say something that could be readily construed as being at variance with the Law of Moses. They hoped to gain their purpose in this case by having Him show a sign from heaven, a sign establishing His claim as the Messiah sent by God. They were not sincere in their urgent demand; they had no intention of believing on Him. If He had fufilled their request, they would simply have denounced Him before the people as a false Messiah, in spite of all. The wickedness and hypocrisy of the question affected the Lord very deeply. He fetched a deep sigh in His spirit. He realized that the crisis had come, that henceforth there would be enmity to death against Him on the part of these members of the leading party in the Jewish Church. Then He said the solemn words, in the form of an oath: What sign does this generation seek? Verily I say unto you, if a sign will be given to this generation —! This is an Aramaic form of speaking, leaving the sentence unfinished, the alternative unspoken. It is the strongest form of refusal. In their sense Jesus here and always refused them a sign. If the many miracles that had been performed in the presence of multitudes numbering thousands had made no impression on them, neither would some manifestation out of the sky penetrate their callous hearts. One sign He indeed is reserving for them and for the whole world, Matt. 12, 38—40, a sign so wonderful that they would never understand, much less accept and believe it — His resurrection from the dead. Having given the Pharisees this answer, He left them, and again crossed to the other side of the sea. The obstinacy and hardness of heart which these enemies exhibited hurt Him deeply, and so He wanted to be alone for a while and gain strength for further labors and combats.

The disciples' worry about bread: V. 14. **Now the disciples had forgotten to take bread, neither had they in the ship with them more than one loaf.** V. 15. **And He charged them, saying, Take heed, beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the leaven of Herod.** V. 16. **And they reasoned among themselves, saying, It is because we have no bread.** The departure from the region of Dalmanutha or Magdala had been very hurried. Their course was directed to a country which did not offer much in the form of food. A single loaf, probably one left over from the previous day, was all the provisions the disciples had in the boat. Note: The Lord literally lived up to the precept He had given that the believers should take no thought for the morrow, just as He had taught them to pray for the food which was enough for this day, which would sustain life till the next

36) Luther, 11, 1388. 1389.

morning. But that one lonely loaf of bread was on the mind of the disciples like a heavy load. Jesus, meanwhile, was concerned about much more important things. The encounter with the Pharisees had given Him food for anxious thought with regard to His disciples. Here was a real danger menacing His disciples and the believers of all times. And so He turned to His fellow-passengers and charged them, gave them the earnest precept to keep their eyes open, to watch, to beware against the leaven of the Pharisees and also that of Herod. It was a figurative, proverbial saying, which was in general use among the Jews, since they often applied this word to something foreign to a substance, something that might cause fermentation and rotting, 1 Cor. 5, 6. "With this expression something should be indicated that in itself is small and insignificant, but when mixed with other things exerts a most extensive influence, which can scarce be resisted. The Lord warns against the pharisaic and Herodianic leaven. Theirs is a hypocritical manner, that emphasizes the external appearance, that pretends to be strict in worship and yet transgresses and sets aside God's commandments; their blindness in spiritual things should be indicated, which they gloss over with a show of sanctity. Before one is aware of it, the whole heart is filled with it, even if one has made only the slightest concession. But just as earnestly the Lord feels constrained to warn against the leaven of Herod. This reigning family professed adherence to the tenets of the Jewish Church, but its members drove out the devil of Pharisaism with an equally wicked devil; they wanted to introduce among the Jews the heathenish, loose, dissolute life, of which we had an example in the birthday festival of Herod Antipas. Instead of a hypocritical religion they introduced the religion of the flesh. Also in this respect the disciples of Christ must beware of the slightest beginnings." 37)

But the disciples were as dense as usual. They received the charge in silence and then talked the matter over among themselves quietly, lest the Master should hear. The conclusion they arrived at was this, that the words of the Lord were a reprimand because they had neglected to bring enough bread along. That one fact was worrying them. And, like them, the believers of all times find it very hard to separate their minds from the cares of this life. Christ, the Lord of heaven and earth, was with them in the boat, but that did not reassure the disciples. He is with us just as surely, according to His promise, even though His physical, visible presence has been withdrawn, but our hearts are usually just as badly beset by our concern for daily food.

The reproof of Christ: V. 17. **And when Jesus knew it, He saith unto them, Why reason ye because ye have no bread? Perceive ye not yet, neither understand? Have ye your heart yet hardened?** V. 18. **Having eyes, see ye not, and having ears, hear ye not, and do ye not remember?** V. 19. **When I brake the five loaves among five thousand, how many baskets full of fragments took ye up? They say unto Him, Twelve.** V. 20. **And when the seven among the four thousand, how many baskets full of fragments took ye up? And they said, Seven.** V. 21. **And He said unto them, How is it that ye do not understand?** Jesus had been busy with His thoughts, but His attention was now directed to His disciples by their whispering and consulting. And, without inquiring, by virtue of His omniscience, He knew the matter of their dispute and their conclusion. That was a worse blow than the enmity of the Pharisees. He gives utterance to a sharp reprimand in the form of a bitter complaint: Why are you consulting together about loaves which you have not? Not yet do you know or understand? Yet have you a heart that is calloused? Having eyes you see not, and having ears you hear not, and do not remember? It was lack of faith, lack of trust in Him, which was evident in the case of the disciples, as if there were nothing higher to be thought of than bread. They were almost on a level with the Jews to whom the Lord had applied the word of Isaiah concerning the hardness of their hearts. But, after all, it was only weakness, and not malice, in their case. And so the Lord uses a gentler tone in reminding them of the two great miracles of feeding which they had witnessed. He comes to their assistance by catechizing them on these exhibitions of divine power, to see whether they had taken proper note of all incidents. This they had remembered and answered correctly. And now He again urges them to consider the matter once more, very carefully, and see whether they could not reach the right conclusion. And this time they understood what He had referred to and what He wanted to teach, Matt. 16, 12.

The Blind Man of Bethsaida.

Mark 8, 22—26.

V. 22. **And He cometh to Bethsaida; and they bring a blind man unto Him, and besought Him to touch him.** V. 23. **And He took the blind man by the hand, and led him out of the town; and when He had spit on his eyes, and put His hands upon him, He asked him if he saw aught.** V. 24. **And he looked up and said, I see men as trees, walking.** V. 25. **After that He put His hands again upon his eyes, and made him look up; and he was restored, and saw every man clearly.** V. 26. **And He sent him away to his house, saying, Neither go into the town, nor tell it to any in the town.** This is the second miracle whose account is peculiar to Mark, and he

37) *Syn.-Ber., Iowa Dist.*, 1907, 65.

relates it in just the same circumstantial, detailed way as the other, 7, 31—36. Jesus had crossed the sea with His disciples and landed on the northeast shore. Here, on the east side of the river Jordan, just where it flows into the Sea of Galilee, was the city of Bethsaida-Julias. Philip, the tetrarch of Gaulanitis, had built this city on the site of a former village and had called it, in honor of the daughter of the emperor, Bethsaida-*Julias*, to distinguish it from the other Bethsaida, on the western shore of the lake. Even in this neighborhood, where the Lord had probably never been for any length of time, His fame had preceded Him. They, the relatives or friends, brought a blind man to Him, and begged Him earnestly that He should touch him, having confidence that a mere touch of His hand would make him whole, restore his sight. The Lord wanted no publicity; He had come for the purpose of being alone with His disciples. So He took the blind man's hand and led him out of the village or city. Probably only His disciples were present. Having moistened the dead eyes with some spittle, He laid His hands on him, on his eyes, and then asked him whether he could see. The eyesight had been restored to some extent, so that the blind man could now see objects in indistinct, blurred outlines. But a second laying on of hands corrected this defect, enabling him to see things clearly, since he was now restored to the proper use of his sight. He could see all things sharply defined and standing out clearly. The miracle had returned the full use of his dead members to him. The reason for this gradual healing, that the blind man first looked up in the tentative manner peculiar to the blind, then saw things through a mist, and finally was fully restored, is not indicated. It should impress upon all Christians the great value of the sense of sight and of all senses, so that they appreciate and use them properly, never forgetting to give thanks to the Giver of all good gifts for them. In order to avoid a sensation, Jesus did not permit the man to return to his house, nor even to go into the city. He wanted to continue the work for which He had left Galilee.

Jesus the Christ and His Service.

Mark 8, 27—38.

A journey to the heathen country: V. 27. **And Jesus went out, and His disciples, into the towns of Caesarea-Philippi; and by the way He asked His disciples, saying unto them, Whom do men say that I am?** V. 28. **And they answered, John the Baptist; but some say, Elias; and others, One of the prophets.** Jesus now at last got the opportunity for which He had been waiting and planning for some time. His work was to instruct His disciples more fully in the essentials of their calling, for this preparation was sorely needed. Leaving Bethsaida-Julias, they traveled northward by easy stages, until they came into the vicinity, into the suburbs of Caesarea-Philippi. They were now in the province of Gaulanitis, or Auranitis, in which Philip was tetrarch. Caesarea was its capital. It had been built on the site of the former village Panium, on the eastern slope of the Lebanon, near the source of the Jordan. Philip called the new city Caesarea, in honor of the emperor, but to distinguish it from the city of the same name on the western coast of Palestine, he added his own name as a distinguishing mark. The whole district was now known by this name. It was a beautiful and prosperous region, upon which the snow-covered peak of Hermon looked down. But the inhabitants were, for the most part, heathen. Jesus here had the leisure, as His little company slowly traveled along the highways, to impart to them some of the information which would later stand them in good stead. But He also took the opportunity to ask them questions concerning the knowledge they had gained, a method sure to be effective in the case of such a teacher. He asked them, in a preliminary way, what opinion the people, especially those of northern Palestine, of Galilee, and of the country west of the Jordan, had concerning Him. They answered Him according to the information they had. Many held the opinion that He was John the Baptist; others, that He was Elijah in a reincarnation; others, that He was one of the prophets. Cp. chapter 6, 14. 15.

The confession of Peter: V. 29. **And He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? And Peter answereth and saith unto Him, Thou art the Christ.** V. 30. **And He charged them that they should tell no man of Him.** The first answer had been given willingly enough, for the information could be easily supplied. But now Christ puts the direct question to all disciples, emphasizing the pronoun: How about you? What is your opinion and confession? Note: The words are spoken to all apostles, not to a single one, nor to a group; Jesus wanted a frank, clear statement of their belief. The answer of Peter, therefore, can be understood properly only in this sense, as a confession of them all: Thou art the Christ. They hereby declared it as their firm conviction that their Master was the promised Messiah, and ascribed to Him all the attributes with which the prophets had endowed this greatest prophet of all. The confession of Peter is the confession of all true believers of all times. The question, What think ye of Jesus? is the great test question of the ages. By his personal relation to Jesus Christ, the Son of God, will the fate of every person be determined. It makes and posits the difference between believing Christians and unbelievers, the children of this world. People in general consider Christ a mere man, endowed, indeed, with many unusual virtues and with exceptional wisdom, but, after all, a mere man. But the Chris-

tians believe that this man is Jesus Christ, by God's counsel and will the Savior and Redeemer of the world, that He is true God, born of the Father from eternity. After commending the confession very highly, Jesus charged His disciples, He spoke in a tone of menace, almost threateningly, as if expecting foolish talk in this sacred matter, or to prevent the spread of false ideas regarding the work of the Messiah. For that in itself was the most difficult problem, to keep the disciples and others from indulging in all kinds of carnal hopes of a worldly empire, of a kingdom of this world. In our days such an objurgation would be needed with double emphasis, since the work of the millennialists is advancing rapidly and their literature is being spread broadcast over the country. We need no new Gospel, but we need the right, the simple understanding of the old Gospel, unclouded and unspoiled by the dreams of men that have no proper conception either of the person or of the work of Christ.

The first announcement of the Passion: V. 31. **And He began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders, and of the chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again.** V. 32. **And He spake that saying openly. And Peter took Him, and began to rebuke Him.** V. 33. **But when He had turned about and looked on His disciples, He rebuked Peter, saying, Get thee behind Me, Satan; for thou savorest not the things that be of God, but the things that be of men.** Having accepted their confession and thus substantiated the same regarding His person and office, Jesus now took the opportunity to instruct them more fully in the knowledge of salvation. It was a new form of teaching which the Lord introduced at this point, no longer in parables, figures, and dark allusions and intimations, but with perfect freedom and openness. He, the Son of Man, *must* suffer much. That was the duty which He had taken upon Himself, the obligation which He had shouldered. This suffering is then analyzed. He would be rejected by the elders and by the high priests and by the scribes. It would finally narrow down to this: if the religious authorities would approve of Jesus as the Messiah and accept His teaching, the people would follow. But now it was a foregone conclusion that they would most emphatically disapprove of Him and His ministry. And so the result would follow very naturally: suffering, death, — but also resurrection, a fact which the Jewish leaders did not take into account. All these predictions Jesus made with absolute frankness, keeping silence with regard to nothing. The word used here by the evangelist is one which is also fittingly applied to the work of the Christian ministry, 2 Cor. 3, 12. The sum and substance of Gospel-preaching is included in the statement of Christ and in the confession of the disciples. The telling of this wondrous story must be signalized and characterized by the same unwavering, unhesitating boldness with which Jesus here spoke; it is the only way in which the message of salvation will be effective.

It was here that Peter, in his impulsive way, presumed upon a step for which he had absolutely no right. He drew Jesus aside a few steps and began to rebuke Him. The fact that He had just acknowledged Himself to be the Messiah, and that He now spoke of suffering and dying did not seem to Peter to agree. He had an altogether different idea concerning the work of a Messiah. But Jesus could brook no interference where His divine labor of love was concerned. He turned around to all the disciples, in order to draw their attention to His words and acts, since there was a lesson for them all here. He then turned to Peter and reprimanded him most severely: Away, behind Me, Satan! Peter here proved the adversary of Christ; it was Satan himself that was attempting to hinder the work of redemption through Peter. His suggestion and opinion had nothing of God's will in it, but only that of man, weak, sinful man, that cannot understand God's ways and works. All the disciples felt the reproof, though it was directed to Peter only. And the warning stands to-day for all those that would weaken the fact of Christ's suffering and death in the interest of sinful mankind. In the suffering and death of Christ divine and human ways and methods part company. The cross of Christ is a foolishness and an offense to human ideas, but in reality divine wisdom and divine power.

Concerning true discipleship: V. 34. **And when He had called the people unto Him with His disciples also, He said unto them, Whosoever will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.** V. 35. **For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for My sake and the Gospel's, the same shall save it.** V. 36. **For what shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?** V. 37. **Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?** V. 38. **Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of Me and of My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him also shall the Son of Man be ashamed when He cometh in the glory of His Father with the holy angels.** Jesus had given the disciples a summary of His work in the interest of fallen humanity, the essential and characteristic Messianic ministry. He now gives a summary of the demands of true discipleship, addressed not only to the twelve apostles, but to a multitude of people whom the Lord expressly calls for that purpose. He does not speak of the manner in which a person becomes a disciple, but the way in which he gives evidence of the faith living in him. There are three points that Christ emphasizes: 1) Denying self; 2) taking up the

cross; 3) following Christ. A person who becomes a disciple of Christ really loses his identity, his individuality, so far as spiritual things are concerned. He no longer knows himself or insists upon his opinion and work. He sets aside all his own natural lusts and desires. But he must expect and therefore freely take upon himself the cross and suffering which is sure to strike him on account of his confession of Christ, though it lead into death itself. Thus the entire life of the Christian will finally resolve itself into that one purpose, to follow Christ wherever He may lead, and not doubt for the fraction of a second that His way is always best. The Lord explains this at some length. If any one wants to save his life, have the full enjoyment of this life and all that it may offer in this world, he will lose the true life in Christ the Savior. But if any one will regard this life, the world and all it has to offer, as nothing, give it all up for the sake of Jesus and His Gospel, he will find the true life, the true joy and happiness in Him. If we should put the whole world with all its immeasurable riches on the credit side of the ledger and a single man's soul on the debit side, the credit side would be practically effaced. There is nothing in the wide world which can measure up to the value of a single soul, especially not if one considers the fact that the Son of God shed His blood for that soul. Note: This statement will be readily assented to in theory by almost every person in the world, but in practise the great majority discard the idea as foolish; to enjoy this life first, and, if there still be time, to prepare for the next, that is the religion of many, even of those that bear the Christian name.

But there is another distinguishing mark which Jesus emphasizes at the end of His address. The entire world, all men by nature, are an adulterous generation, given to idolatry of some kind, and therefore guilty of all, transgressing all the commandments of God. If therefore, now that the Redeemer has appeared and His message of salvation has gone forth into all the world, any one hears this Gospel, and yet is ashamed of it and of the Redeemer whose praise it proclaims, then this same Redeemer, but now in the form of the Judge of the living and the dead, will also be ashamed of him and will condemn him on that last great day. For then there will no longer be weakness and lowliness to set Him apart, but He will appear in the glory of His Father, with all the holy angels as His body-guard, Matt. 10, 33; 2 Tim. 2, 12.

Summary. *Jesus feeds four thousand men in the wilderness, is tempted by the Pharisees, warns His disciples against the leaven of the Pharisees and the Herodians, reproves their worldly care, heals the blind man of Bethsaida, accepts the confession of His Messiahship, and gives a lesson in true discipleship.*

CHAPTER 9.

The Transfiguration of Jesus.

Mark 9, 1—13.

A solemn statement: V. 1. **And He said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That there be some of them that stand here which shall not taste of death till they have seen the kingdom of God come with power.** These words were probably addressed to His disciples only, or at least spoken of them alone, since they presuppose an intimacy with Jesus which most of the people in that country did not possess. Some of those that were standing there in the circle listening to His words would not taste of death, would not be taken away by death, until they would see the kingdom of God coming, or having come, in power. The day upon which the wrath of God was poured out over Jerusalem is, according to Scriptures, the beginning, the dawn of the great day of God on which He will send Christ in glory, to judge the quick and the dead. The destruction of Jerusalem was not only a type, but actually began the final great judgment of God upon the sinful world that rejected Him and His Son. Several of the disciples of Jesus that heard these words were still alive when the destruction of Jerusalem took place, and thus became witnesses of the way in which the glorified Christ repays, punishes, those that have despised His Word and His grace. So the words of Christ in this instance were both a prediction and a promise.

The miracle of the transfiguration: V. 2. **And after six days Jesus taketh with Him Peter and James and John, and leadeth them up into an high mountain apart by themselves; and He was transfigured before them.** V. 3. **And His raiment became shining, exceeding white as snow, so as no fuller on earth can white them.** V. 4. **And there appeared unto them Elias with Moses; and they were talking with Jesus.** Six days, or after a six-day interval from the day when Jesus gave His disciples and the people the solemn lesson regarding true discipleship, He added another item of preparation for some of those in His immediate neighborhood. He did not take all of His disciples with Him on this excursion, but only Peter, James, and John; as on other occasions, these three men were His intimates, His most trusted pupils, chapter 5, 37; 14, 33. He took them aside, away from the rest, and led them up into a high mountain where they were all alone, with no one to interfere with their work

or any other intention. Whether this mountain or hill was Mount Hermon in the Lebanon Range (9,200 feet high), or Mount Tabor, in the neighborhood of Nazareth, in Galilee (1,000 feet high), cannot be determined definitely from the text. The latter mountain is favored by many commentators because it was mentioned at a very early date. But the claim that the fortress with its soldiers on this mountain would have interfered with the revelation is now generally allowed. But the whole question is not a matter of faith. It is best that people do not know for sure, lest the superstition and idolatry of so-called holy places extend beyond all bounds. Mount Hermon was near Caesarea-Philippi, but Mount Tabor could easily have been reached in a six-day journey.

On this high mountain which Jesus had selected for this demonstration, He was changed, transformed, transfigured before the three disciples; His common, mortal body was changed to a spiritual, immortal body, the spirituality transfused the ordinary body, as one commentator puts it. Not only His body was thus transfigured, but even His garments partook of this peculiar change. They became shining or glittering, charged with light, and so snowy white that no cleaner or dyer on earth would have been able to produce such absolute whiteness. The entire appearance of Christ was one of indescribable splendor, much more so even than that of Moses, after he had spoken with God, 2 Cor. 3, 7; Ex. 34, 29—35. And while the disciples were gazing at their Master in wonder and amazement, there appeared unto them, so that they could see and recognize them, Elijah and Moses, who then had a conversation with Christ concerning His glorification, which was here typified. Moses, the great teacher of the Law and prophet of Jehovah, and Elijah, the prophet that had been so zealous for the honor of Israel's God, were fitting representatives of the Old Covenant. Moreover, Moses had died and been buried by the hand of God, who alone knew where his grave was situated, and Elijah had been taken up into heaven without death by the Lord. They were intimates of God from of old.

The revelation of God: V. 5. **And Peter answered and said to Jesus, Master, it is good for us to be here; and let us make three tabernacles: one for Thee and one for Moses and one for Elias.** V. 6. **For he wist not what to say; for they were sore afraid.** V. 7. **And there was a cloud that overshadowed them; and a voice came out of the cloud, saying, This is My beloved Son; hear Him.** The effect of this singular experience was such as to put the disciples into a state of ecstasy; they were almost intoxicated with the glory of the singular appearance. They were incidentally in a condition of half-sleep, overcome by the brightness of their transfigured Master. It was while in this state that Peter made the suggestion to Jesus. He was filled with joy as on the great Festival of Tabernacles, when all Israel lived in huts made of branches of trees during the eight days of celebration. If the feeling of elation was to continue as he felt it now, Peter was ready to stay here indefinitely. So he offers to build three tabernacles: one for Jesus, one for Moses, one for Elijah. His idea seems to have been that they might live together in glory, just as Moses did on the mountain of the Lord in the wilderness. Such is the effect which a mere peep, a single glance, into the glory beyond the grave will have on the believers; how much more glorious will the reality be, when Christ Himself will be visible to all believers in eternal transfiguration, and not only Moses and Elijah, but all the thousands of God's elect will be with Him, converse with Him, and praise Him, world without end! Peter evidently thought that Moses and Elijah had come to stay, — that was the explanation he made to himself, — and that explains his suggestion. His impulsive nature prompted him to say something, and, as in other cases, his first thought, which he voiced almost mechanically, was not the one that fitted the situation, though it is not to his discredit. He knew not what to say in this instance, for they were literally frightened out of their wits. And the end of the miracle was not yet. It happened, Mark writes, in order to direct the attention to the important incidents, first, that a cloud overshadowed them, a bright and shining cloud enfolded them; and secondly, that a voice came out of the cloud, for God the Father was present in the cloud, His great glory was inside; it was the cloud of the New Testament covenant, 2 Pet. 1, 17. The message of admonition which came out of the cloud was: This is My beloved Son; hear Him, render to Him full obedience. That was a sign from heaven such as had never before been witnessed by human eyes. That was such a powerful testimony for the person and work of Christ that the disciples were compelled to admit its emphasis and accept its import. Mark: God distinctly calls attention to the Word of Jesus, demanding for it the close and careful attention of all men, and the obedience which is justly accorded to God's Word only. Only he that accepts Jesus as the Son of God, begotten of the Father from eternity, beloved of God even in His state of humiliation, and he that thereupon is obedient to the Word of the Gospel, and puts his full trust in that alone, will be received by God into sonship. But to him the full glory of heaven will be revealed, in a measure even here in the Gospel of salvation, whose content is Jesus, and afterward with the full burst of beauty and radiance, from the throne of the Lamb. "This appearance shows that the present life is nothing in comparison with the future one, which will most surely come upon us that are, in Christ, dead to the world. And we owe it to God that we thank Him with great praise that He has conde-

scended in His great goodness to reveal this to us, and that by this beautiful, open, and powerful revelation He intended to make us sure of the hope of eternal life." 38)

The end of the transfiguration: V. 8. **And suddenly, when they had looked round about, they saw no man any more, save Jesus only with themselves.** V. 9. **And as they came down from the mountain, He charged them that they should tell no man what things they had seen till the Son of Man were risen from the dead.** V. 10. **And they kept that saying with themselves, questioning one with another what the rising from the dead should mean.** Just as quickly as the miraculous appearance had begun, it also ended. The disciples, still half dazed, felt that the pall was lifted, and, looking about them, saw no one but Jesus alone with them. Moses and Elijah had been returned to the place of eternal happiness in the same wonderful manner as they had been brought down to the mountain. Jesus, their Master, now was with them again in His usual form and dress, with no evidence of the glory which had just shone through Him. His reassuring words and touch brought them back fully to their senses. While they were then descending from the mountain together, He gave them the earnest charge to transmit the account of what they had seen to no one until after the resurrection of the Son of Man. The people had an altogether wrong idea as to the work and mission of the Messiah, and the news of this miraculous appearance would only have strengthened this false conception. But at that time, when His death would have removed and disproved all wrong beliefs and hopes in an earthly Messiah, with an earthly kingdom, and especially after He would have risen from the dead, then this revelation should be part of their preaching, they should not hesitate about proclaiming the full truth about the transfiguration. The three disciples accepted this charge in the proper spirit of meekness and obedience; they kept their secret until the time that Jesus had indicated, even from the other disciples. In the mean time, however, they discussed the question among themselves, how that was to be understood concerning the rising from the dead. Not that they did not know that there would be a resurrection of the dead on the last day. This doctrine was known and believed by all the Jews, the only ones dissenting being the sect of the Sadducees. The difficulty for them lay in this, both when He should arise from the dead, as some manuscripts have it, and how this would be done. Christ's one announcement concerning His Passion, death, and resurrection had not yet entered into their heart and understanding. What express and particular resurrection of the dead the Lord was referring to for Himself was a mystery to them. Thus earnest Christians will find many points in Scriptures and in the sayings of Jesus that are a mystery to them; they do not understand in what sense they are to be understood and applied in individual instances; but a careful searching of the Word will open the eyes, under the guidance of the Spirit.

A question of the disciples: V. 11. **And they asked Him, saying, Why say the scribes that Elias must first come?** V. 12. **And He answered and told them, Elias verily cometh first and restoreth all things; and how it is written of the Son of Man that He must suffer many things and be set at naught.** V. 13. **But I say unto you, That Elias is indeed come, and they have done unto him whatsoever they listed, as it is written of him.** Peter, James, and John were still busy straightening out matters in their own understanding. They had seen Elijah on the mountain, there was no doubt about that. But now the scribes, on the basis of Mal. 4, 5, were teaching that Elijah was to come before the appearance of the Messiah and restore things to the proper state for the coming of the great Lord. They wanted this apparent contradiction explained. Jesus gladly furnishes them the necessary information. Their statement is right: Elijah, coming in advance, was to prepare the way. Their mistake consisted in applying the prophecy to the wrong person. It was not Elijah, the ancient prophet, in his own person, that would reappear on earth, but his antitype. And that antitype, John, had appeared and done his work. But Jesus immediately adds a few words of instruction concerning the question that had bothered them. How is it written about the Son of Man? He asks. They should remember the Scripture-passages which dealt of His person and work, and make the right application. He Himself gives the answer: That He must suffer much and be utterly despised. Those prophecies would be fulfilled in Him. As for those concerning Elijah, they had been fulfilled. John had come, and they, the Jews and especially Herod and Herodias, had worked their spite against him and put him to death. The disciples were familiar with the fate of the precursor, and they could and should expect nothing else for Him, since the Scripture must be fulfilled. It was the obligation which He had taken upon Himself; it was the work which He would carry out to the end for the redemption of the world.

Casting Out a Deaf-and-Dumb Spirit.
Mark 9, 14—29.

The return to the plain: V. 14. **And when He came to His disciples, He saw a great multitude about them, and the scribes questioning with them.** V. 15. **And straightway all the people, when they beheld Him, were greatly amazed, and, running to Him,**

38) Luther, quoted in Stoeckhardt, *Biblische Geschichte des Neuen Testaments*, 148.

saluted Him. Jesus had been gone over night, leaving His other disciples (except Peter, James, and John) in the plain. It is immaterial, once more, whether they were in Galilee or still in the neighborhood of Caesarea-Philippi at this time; also, whether the apostles in His absence had preached and performed miracles. But when the Lord returned to His disciples, He saw, even from a distance, that there was some unusual commotion. They were in the midst of an excited crowd, and there were some scribes, probably from the neighboring synagog or even from Jerusalem, disputing with them. Things were apparently not running very smoothly in His absence. Immediately, as soon as the people saw and recognized Jesus, they were amazed with joy. They had not expected to see Him so soon, and matters were approaching a crisis here; so it was with a feeling of relief and joy that they all welcomed Him. Running to Him, they saluted Him most respectfully. "The situation is easily conceivable: The disciples have tried to heal the boy and failed; the scribes, delighted with the failure, taunt them with it, and suggest by way of explanation the waning power of the Master, whose name they had vainly attempted to conjure with. The baffled nine make the best defense they can, or perhaps listen in silence." 39) For that reason also the people were delighted to see Christ, because they wanted to see fair play and hoped to see a miracle.

The boy with the dumb spirit: V. 16. **And He asked the scribes, What question ye with them?** V. 17. **And one of the multitude answered and said, Master, I have brought unto Thee my son, which hath a dumb spirit;** v. 18. **and wheresoever he taketh him, he teareth him; and he foameth, and gnasheth with his teeth, and pineth away. And I spake to Thy disciples that they should cast him out; and they could not.** V. 19. **He answereth him and saith, O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I suffer you? Bring him unto Me.** V. 20. **And they brought him unto Him; and when he saw Him, straightway the spirit tare him; and he fell on the ground, and wallowed foaming.** As soon as Jesus came within speaking distance, He inquired about the cause of the disturbance. He asked not only the scribes, but all of them, What is all this disputing about? The scribes had begun the quarrel, and the people had probably taken sides, some with the scribes, some with the apostles. At the approach of Jesus the excitement subsided, both parties being evidently somewhat abashed by His presence. But one man out of the multitude, whose interest was a very natural and deep one, separated himself from the rest and stood forth, answering. He had brought his son, seeking the Lord in the place where the disciples were; but, Jesus being absent, he had appealed to the disciples to heal the boy, and they had not been able to do so. It was a pitiful tale which the man told. His son was lunatic, Matt. 17, 15, and possessed with a spirit, a demon that prevented his speaking. The boy's organ of speech and all his members were normal, but the spirit held them in bonds. And not only that: the demon at times took hold of him and threw him into paroxysms, or cramps, in which the boy foamed at the mouth and ground his teeth, until his body could no longer stand the strain, when he swooned away in a stupor, much like the withering of a branch under a sudden scorching blast. This recital of troubles and the fruitless effort to become rid of them affected the Lord very deeply and caused Him to voice a bitter complaint. Note: His cry about the unbelief of the generation among which He was laboring, His wish to be freed from their presence, was directed to the whole nation of the Jews. They all, with very few exceptions, had heard the Word of the Gospel with ears that heard not. The number of disciples of Jesus was very small after all His efforts, and the number of believers still smaller. Even the apostles, in spite of their confession concerning Jesus the Christ, were still affected with the unbelief of the great mass of the Jews. Upon Christ's command they now brought the boy to Him. No sooner, however, had the boy caught sight of the Lord than the spirit gave a demonstration of his hatred against Jesus and of his spite against the handiwork of God. He tore and twisted the sick boy in a ghastly manner, inflicting torments of every kind upon his body, as in extreme St. Vitus's dance, so that he finally fell to the ground in convulsions, where he rolled about foaming. It was an awful exhibition of the power of Satan over the body of the boy, well calculated to teach his great strength and his lasting hatred against all the works of God.

The healing: V. 21. **And He asked his father, How long is it ago since this came unto him? And he said, Of a child.** V. 22. **And ofttimes it hath cast him into the fire and into the waters to destroy him. But if Thou canst do anything, have compassion on us and help us.** V. 23. **Jesus said unto him, If thou canst believe; all things are possible to him that believeth.** V. 24. **And straightway the father of the child cried out, and said with tears, Lord, I believe; help Thou mine unbelief.** V. 25. **When Jesus saw that the people came running together, He rebuked the foul spirit, saying unto him, Thou dumb and deaf spirit, I charge thee, come out of him, and enter no more into him.** V. 26. **And the spirit cried, and rent him sore, and came out of him. And he was as one dead, insomuch that many said, He is dead.** V. 27. **But Jesus took him by the hand, and lifted**

39) *Expositor's Greek Testament*, I, 401.

him up; and he arose. The evangelist purposely records the details of the healing, in order to bring out all the more strongly the healing power of the Lord in contrast with the destructive power of the devil. Jesus made careful inquiries regarding the length of time that the man's son had suffered, and learned that the demon had taken possession of him in early childhood. He had not prevented his physical growth, but had given every other evidence of his hateful presence by causing him to throw himself into fire, to be burned to death, and into water, to be drowned. We cannot be far wrong in believing that similar symptoms and experiences even to-day, as convulsions, madness, delirium, lunacy, and others, are due to the hatred of Satan. But it is self-evident that the devil has only so much power over the bodies of men as is permitted him by God. So God had frustrated all attempts of the devil upon the life of that boy. Some one always had been present to save his life. Now the father appeals to Christ: Give us help and have mercy upon us! This was a sincere prayer, but unfortunately he modified it by saying: If Thou art in any way able. Here unbelief was battling with belief; he was not quite certain in his trust in Jesus. He implied some doubt as to His ability to help in this severe case of need. Jesus therefore takes time to correct this feeling, using, in a reproving way, almost the same words that the man had used towards Him: If thou only wert able. Here is the difficulty, the grievous mistake; there is still doubt in your heart. It is a favorite reference of Jesus that He here employs: All things are possible to him that believes. True faith has miraculous, heaven-storming qualities, Matt. 17, 20; Phil. 4, 13. This word had the desired effect; with the distraught father. It opened his eyes to his lack of faith. In deep humility he cries out: I believe; come to the assistance of my unbelief. As in the heart of all Christians, belief and unbelief were battling in his heart. But now faith and trust in the Lord were supreme. He trusts entirely in the help of Christ, also against that evil of unbelief that thrusts its head up now and then in his heart. On the part of God all things are possible, if the believer will but accept by faith what God has long ago prepared for him and enabled him to receive through help from above. Meanwhile the people were coming running from all directions, and Jesus wanted to avoid unwelcome publicity. He therefore earnestly reprimanded the unclean spirit, who here caused deafness and dumbness in the boy, giving him the direct command to go out from him and to stay out. The devil must needs obey, but in doing so, he wreaks his vengeance upon the boy for the last time, throwing him into such terrible convulsions as he went forth from him that the boy fell down as one dead, and many openly declared their belief that he was dead. But when Jesus took him by the hand, he could readily get up and stand. Thus the glory of God, which Jesus, the Man, possessed, was once more made evident in this miracle. The Son of God had again triumphed over the devil. There is lasting comfort in this fact for all believers that put their trust unwaveringly in Christ, the Son of the living God. These the devil, with all his might and cunning, cannot harm. And though he should succeed in killing the body, the soul is safe in the hands of the heavenly Father.

The perplexity of the disciples: V. 28. **And when He was come into the house, His disciples asked Him privately, Why could not we cast him out?** V. 29. **And He said unto them, This kind can come forth by nothing but by prayer and fasting.** The failure of the disciples to effect a cure in this case, when there had been instances of success, chapter 6, 13, perplexed them very much. They had also been deeply humiliated before the people by the sneering remarks of the scribes. When Jesus therefore came into the house where He, and probably His disciples with Him, was staying, they took the opportunity to speak to Him all alone in regard to their failure to expel the devil. Christ's answer was of a nature to cause deep humility in their hearts and to encourage them to strive for a firmer trust in Him. The question of the disciples implied: We surely had faith; we had the definite expectation to effect this cure, but we were sadly disappointed. The answer of Jesus gave them the hint which they needed: This form can be expelled in no way but by prayer and fasting. By serious, believing prayer the devil can always be routed. But prayer implies full reliance upon God and His help. There is where the mistake lay. The disciples, who formerly had driven out devils in the name and in the power of the Lord, here had attempted a cure in their own might. It was presumption, trust in their own ability, that had caused them to stumble and fall. The devil can be conquered only by a prayer rooted in faith and receiving its power from God alone, Matt. 17, 20. 21.

The Last Discourses of Christ in Galilee.

Mark 9, 30—50.

A second announcement of His Passion: V. 30. **And they departed thence and passed through Galilee; and He would not that any man should know it.** V. 31. **For He taught His disciples and said unto them, The Son of Man is delivered into the hands of men, and they shall kill Him; and after that He is killed, He shall rise the third day.** V. 32. **But they understood not that saying, and were afraid to ask Him.** "Thence," from the country or region where they had been for some time; this points to Gaulanitis. They now made a journey through Galilee, their last trip with the Lord through these familiar scenes. He did no

public preaching at this time, He wanted no loud heralding. His purpose was to be alone with His disciples, for their instruction had not yet proceeded to the point it should reach before the time of His great Passion. He got into the habit of referring to His approaching suffering, above all. The entire subject of His teaching touched upon this important Gospel-lesson. The entire Passion was so vivid before His eyes that He speaks of it in the present tense: He is delivered into the hands of men. First Judas would deliver Him into the hands of the Jewish rulers, then these would deliver Him into the hands of the Roman governor. Note the thought included here: The Son of Man, the Redeemer in His divine-human nature, having might and authority over all things, delivered into the hands of men, mere men, weak men, that in themselves are powerless before Him. And they kill him. That was their object, and that was, in their opinion, the end of Him and of His aspirations. For Him, however, it is not the end, but only the beginning. After three days He will arise. The remark of the evangelist at this point is almost pitiful. After all the teaching and repeated teaching and referring to the truth of the Old Testament prophecy that Jesus had done, the disciples went along the way with Him in ignorance as to the word that He was uttering. And at the same time they were afraid to ask Him. Natural man cannot comprehend the facts of Christ's Passion, and, incidentally, avoids unpleasant subjects. All the solemn, mysterious beauties of the Gospel are hidden from the heart of man until God Himself, through His Holy Ghost, opens heart and mind, and pictures unto it Christ.

The dispute concerning greatness: V. 33. **And He came to Capernaum; and being in the house He asked them, What was it that ye disputed among yourselves by the way?** V. 34. **But they held their peace; for by the way they had disputed among themselves who should be the greatest.** V. 35. **And He sat down, and called the Twelve, and saith unto them, If any man desire to be first, the same shall be last of all, and servant of all.** V. 36. **And He took a child and set him in the midst of them; and when He had taken him in His arms, He said unto them,** v. 37. **Whosoever shall receive one of such children in My name receiveth Me; and whosoever shall receive Me receiveth not Me, but Him that sent Me.** After the hurried trip through Galilee, Jesus returned to Capernaum with His disciples for the last time. Their theological training, however, was by no means at an end, as we see from this incident. The hearts and the heads of the disciples were yet filled with false Messianic hopes; the idea of a temporal kingdom would not down. And this matter they had discussed on the way, among themselves, disputing about rank, quarreling about who should be considered the greatest in their midst. The question may have been broached at this time because Jesus had taken only three of them along on the mount of transfiguration. Jesus knew of the discussion and, by His omniscience, knew also its topic. Therefore the Lord takes occasion to teach them a badly needed lesson. While He had gone before them, busy with the thoughts pertaining to the way of redemption, they had been engrossed with their vain thoughts, how they might enhance their own glory. They must learn, above all, the lesson of the great paradox in the kingdom of God. To teach them that, He called the Twelve before Him, in a very formal and impressive way. They should, for once, get His full meaning. The general rule in the world is that he is leader and acknowledged as being first that has others working for him, doing work in his service. In the Church of Jesus the reverse is true. There the rank is in proportion to the service offered. The humbler a person is and the more willing he is to serve his fellow-men, the higher he will stand in the economy of God. Instead of urging ambition for high position and power, Christ knows of only one valid reason for fame before Him and His Father, humble, unpretentious service, without a thought of reward. In order to bring home this lesson still more thoroughly, He took a little child that may have been playing in the neighborhood, placed it in their midst, fondled it in His arms to show His deep regard, His tender love for children, and then told the disciples, that in receiving a child, in rendering to one of these little ones a service, they were rendering one to Him. And a service shown to Him is credited in heaven as though it had been shown to God Himself. This powerful lesson in true humility, in humble service, is needed very urgently in our days, since the false ambition that was found in the midst of the disciples is rampant in the Church and threatens to render much of the preaching of the cross invalid.

An interruption: V. 38. **And John answered Him, saying, Master, we saw one casting out devils in Thy name, and he followeth not us; and we forbade him because he followeth not us.** V. 39. **But Jesus said, Forbid him not; for there is no man which shall do a miracle in My name that can lightly speak evil of Me.** V. 40. **For he that is not against us is on our part.** John, gentle John, whose mildness and uniform charitableness has justly become proverbial, at this time was still a true "son of thunder," as Jesus had called him. His zeal and impetuosity was in danger of doing much more harm than good. He is eager to make a good impression on Jesus at this time, and so he interrupts the Master to tell about an experience which he had had. In their work they had run across a man who was exorcising, casting out demons. Ordinarily, such exorcists conjured with the name of some

Old Testament saint or patriarch. But this man used the name of Christ, since he had heard of Him and had probably seen Him expelling demons. This man did not belong to the little band of disciples, he was going over the field on his own responsibility. John's zeal, therefore, had caused him to make an effort at preventing his work (conative imperfect). John's idea was that he had done a good, a commendable thing before the Lord, and eagerly looked forward to the praise which he felt must be forthcoming. But Jesus disappoints him grievously. He censures John for this action on his part. So long as that exorcist was using the name of Jesus reverently, so long as he was employing it for the purpose of performing miracles for the good of people, so long he would not circulate evil reports and blasphemies concerning the Savior. In a case of this kind it is true that every one not working against Jesus is aiding Him. The same thought is employed by Paul, Phil. 1, 14—19. In false intolerance and legalistic conduct there is often a good deal of presumption and jealousy. We have no right to expect all to serve the Lord in the same way, since gifts and ability are diversified. If others cannot bring the services and sacrifices for Christ which we think proper, we have no right to question the sincerity of their Christianity.

Christ continues His lesson: V. 41. **For whosoever shall give a cup of water to drink in My name because ye belong to Christ, verily I say unto you, he shall not lose his reward.** V. 42. **And whosoever shall offend one of these little ones that believe in Me, it is better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he were cast into the sea.** V. 43. **And if thy hand offend thee, cut it off; it is better for thee to enter into life maimed than, having two hands, to go into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched;** v. 44. **where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.** After the interruption, Christ resumes His discourse. It is not always the big and mighty works in the kingdom of Christ, the miracles, that count and are credited. A small, incidental service, a cup of water offered in His name, to show a service for His sake, is thought of so highly by Him that He promises His definite reward. On the other hand, if any one scandalizes, offends, causes one of these little ones that believe on Christ, especially also little children, to do wrong or to get an impression which will cause such a person to think less highly of Christ and of the Christian Church, this is an offense which the Lord cannot condemn too strongly. Far better, He says, it would be for such a person to be cast into the sea with a millstone about his neck before such an offense is committed. Here a grave responsibility is placed upon all parents, teachers, and all whose duty brings them into contact with children and with such as are small in the kingdom of God, the Christians that are weak in Christian knowledge. To watch over our mouths that they do not speak words, to watch over our members that they do not commit deeds, that will cause harm and offense, that is a solemn obligation, for which account will be demanded on the last day with most severe reckoning. In this respect the hand is very apt to offend, almost unconsciously it is placed into the service of sin. Constant watchfulness is necessary, lest the sin which it commits, the offense which it gives, become a part of the accumulated guilt which will bring upon such a person the punishment of hell-fire.

The conclusion of Christ's discourse: V. 45. **And if thy foot offend thee, cut it off; it is better for thee to enter halt into life, than having two feet to be cast into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched,** v. 46. **where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.** V. 47. **And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out; it is better for thee to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, than, having two eyes, to be cast into hell-fire,** v. 48. **where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.** V. 49. **For every one shall be salted with fire, and every sacrifice shall be salted with salt.** V. 50. **Salt is good; but if the salt have lost his saltness, wherewith will ye season it? Have salt in yourselves, and have peace one with another.** Christ here mentions some other members that are very apt to offend, to commit sin, to lead others into sin. The law of sin is always active in our members. Here it is necessary that a person keep these members in subjection. For the Lord speaks figuratively and does not want to be understood, as Luther says, that He here advocates physical mutilation or dismemberment, since that would obviously not take the sin and the desire to sin out of the heart. It is the heart which must be controlled by the spirit of love toward Christ and our neighbor, in order that the hand, the foot, the eye do not perform that which sin desires them to do. Whosoever places his members into the service of sin, of uncleanness, and unrighteousness here in this life, will hereafter pay the penalty for such transgression in all eternity. But whosoever, with the help of the Holy Ghost, brings his members into subjection, trains them, holds his desires in check, does not permit sin to reign in his body, he will retain faith and a good conscience, he will keep body and soul unto life eternal. Note: This passage makes such a deep impression on account of the earnestness of the Savior and because of His solemn reference to the fire of hell, and to the worm that will not die, and to the fire that will not be quenched. The fires of the Valley of Hinnom, near Jerusalem, where all the refuse of the city was burned, were commonly taken as a type of the fires of hell. As these fires burned without ceasing, day and night, so the

fires of hell will offer no respite. And as the worms were continually feeding on the remains of carcasses and refuse that was dumped out into that valley, so some of the torments of hell will be like the ceaseless gnawing of worms. To try to crack jokes at the expense of the doctrine of hell, or to deny this doctrine outright, for the flimsiest reasons, is decidedly blasphemous in view of such passages as the present and Luke 16, 28.

This sacrifice, this continual working and bringing into subjection one's own members for the sake of Christ, is demanded by Christ in the interest of His purpose to make every Christian and the entire Christian Church a salt in this world. As every sacrifice of the Old Testament had to be salted, Lev. 2, 13, so every disciple, every believer, must be salted with fire. Jesus does not refer, in this instance, to the fire of hell, but to the purifying fire of His rule and leading. It is the discipline of the Word and the Spirit of God which gradually cleanses the believers of sin, and kills the works and desires of the flesh, and the fire of tribulation, which renders sin and its results unpleasant, 1 Pet. 1, 4. This fire incidentally performs the work of a salt, it prevents moral rotting and a relapse into the service of sin. And the Christians that have been sanctified by the Word and the Spirit of God and whose sanctification is progressing continually should have this salt with them always, in doctrine and admonition. They shall freely, as occasion offers, rebuke the false works of the world, instead of permitting the world to lead them into sin. But among themselves, one with another, they should maintain peace and not boastingly seek self-glorification. The fact that the Gospel is a salt is brought out strongly by Luther in admonishing the Christians to be a true salt. "Where the salt loses its saltiness, and the Gospel is spoiled with doctrines of men, there the old Adam no longer can be spiced, there the worms will grow. But salt is sharp; therefore it is necessary to have patience and peace in the salt." 40)

Summary. *After the miracle of the transfiguration, Jesus heals a deaf-mute boy, gives His disciples information concerning their inability to cast this demon out, announces His Passion for the second time, and gives them a long discourse on service, humility, and on giving offense.*

40) Luther, 8, 1839.

CHAPTER 10.

A Question concerning Divorce.

Mark 10, 1—12.

The journey to Judea: V. 1. **And He arose from thence, and cometh into the coasts of Judea by the farther side of Jordan; and the people resort unto Him again; and, as He was wont, He taught them again.** Jesus now, definitely and finally, left Galilee. He went out from Capernaum, after the last discourse to His disciples, journeyed southward along the shores of the Sea of Galilee, and then crossed the Jordan into Perea, on the far side of the Jordan, on His way into Judea. But as He went along His way, probably even in Galilee, but especially in Perea, people crowded about Him, His identity being known, and they went with Him, they accompanied Him. With His usual Savior's mercy, He saw these people in their great spiritual need, and therefore He again followed His custom of teaching them the one thing needful.

The Pharisees tempt Christ with a question: V. 2. **And the Pharisees came to Him and asked Him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife? tempting Him.** V. 3. **And He answered and said unto them, What did Moses command you?** V. 4. **And they said, Moses suffered to write a bill of divorcement and to put her away.** The Pharisees were still dogging Christ's footsteps. As soon as a multitude gathered about Christ, they felt it their duty, in the interest of the Jewish Church, to interfere, and to keep Him from teaching the people. Here they purposely put their question in a broad manner, in order to lead the Lord into a trap, which they thought they had skilfully concealed. If He answered in the negative, they could accuse Him of disagreeing with Moses, and the people would be displeased, since the morals, so far as the Sixth Commandment was concerned, were very loose. If He answered in the positive, they could accuse Him of furthering the prevailing looseness of morals. But Jesus saw through their scheme, and prepared to catch them in their own trap. It was a fine battle of wits. He asked them what Moses had commanded them, with the accent on the verb "command." He wanted them to state what God had said at the institution of marriage concerning the strength of the marriage-tie. They, in turn, hoped to avoid an unpleasant corner in the argument, by referring to Deut. 24, 1, and stating what Moses had permitted. In order to safeguard the position of the wife at least to some extent and to prevent the looseness of the marriage-tie, which was such a scandal in all heathen countries, Moses had, in his legislative enactments, at the instigation of God, enjoined the giving of a writ of divorcement, of a letter properly setting forth the reasons why a man rejected his wife. The object was to prevent divorces for all kinds of trivial reasons.

The answer of Jesus: **V. 5. And Jesus answered and said unto them, For the hardness of your heart he wrote you this precept. V. 6. But from the beginning of the creation God made them male and female. V. 7. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and cleave to his wife;** v. 8. **and they twain shall be one flesh; so, then, they are no more twain, but one flesh. V. 9. What therefore God hath joined together let not man put asunder.** Jesus was well acquainted with this bit of Mosaic legislation, and He also knew the reasons for the adoption of this precept in the Jewish law. The form of government in the Jewish nation during the first centuries of its national existence was that of a theocracy, of a direct legislating by God. The order to which they referred was given by Moses in his capacity as Jewish lawgiver, in order to prevent worse injury and injustice. The government will sometimes find it a wise policy to leave some wrong go unpunished, lest a great many innocent people suffer with the guilty. But this dispensation of Moses, which was given on account of the hardness of their hearts, did not in any way invalidate the institution of marriage and the holiness of the tie of wedlock. That institution and the words of institution are a part of the Moral Law of the universe; there, in the beginning, God plainly stated His will and intention with regard to the obligations of man and woman in the state of wedlock. He did not create a single sex, but He made two sexes, male and female, Gen. 1, 28. And these two sexes, represented in one man and one woman, were to be united in marriage. Therefore the second passage from Genesis, 2, 14, indicates the normal, the usual state of affairs. A man, having reached marriageable age, and having observed the other preliminary steps enjoined by God, will leave his father and his mother, will sever the relationship of childhood and youth, and will be joined to his wife, will enter into a new relationship which will make him and his wife one flesh. It is, then, no longer a question of their own whim and choice, but of God's ordinance, so that they are no longer two, but only one body and one flesh. It is the most intimate union which is possible in the external, temporal world. This fact should be stated and reiterated in our own midst without ceasing, lest the sanctity of the marriage-bond be disregarded more and more. Young people in many cases do not seek the institution of Christ in the sense in which Christ made the ordinance; they have other motives: the pursuit of voluptuousness and luxury. The inviolability of the marriage contract before God has become a blasphemous jest and mockery. But Christ here says: What God hath joined together, where two people have agreed to become yoke-fellows, to bow their necks under the same yoke, to draw the wagon of life together, to share, under God's rule and blessing, all joys and sorrows alike, there this yoke shall not be broken; no man, not the young people or their parents, not relatives or so-called good friends, no court in the world, shall and can separate them. Even if the courts declare the marriage-bond dissolved, it still holds in the sight of God.

An additional explanation to the disciples: **V. 10. And in the house His disciples asked Him again of the same matter. V. 11. And He saith unto them, Whosoever shall put away his wife, and marry another, committeth adultery against her. V. 12. And if a woman shall put away her husband, and be married to another, she committeth adultery.** The disciples were still deeply imbued with the teaching of the scribes, of the rabbis, which they had heard from their youth. The statements of Christ differed so plainly from the customs with which they were familiar that they took up the matter with the Master once more in their lodging-place. They wanted to be sure that they had heard aright and that Jesus had nothing to add in further explanation to them alone. But He only summarizes once more what He said on the way: If any man divorce his wife, loose her from the marriage-bond, and marry another, he commits adultery to the prejudice of, against, the first. The loose morals in the intercourse between the sexes may have been the rule among the Jews, and constant association with these abuses may have made the disciples as callous as all the rest. But that does not affect one whit the ordinance of God. The same rule holds true in the case of a woman: If she divorces her husband, looses the marriage-bond that held him to her, as she could do according to Palestinian law in those days,[41]) she commits adultery. Cp. Matt. 5, 31. 32; 19, 3—9.

Jesus Blesses Little Children.

Mark 10, 13—16.

V. 13. And they brought young children to Him that He should touch them. And His disciples rebuked those that brought them. V. 14. But when Jesus saw it, He was much displeased and said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not; for of such is the kingdom of God. V. 15. Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein. V. 16. And He took them up in His arms, put His hands upon them, and blessed them. It was while Jesus was still on His way to Judea, and while He was making the journey by easy stages, that one of the most appealing incidents in His entire ministry occurred. He had probably sat down in some village to rest for a few moments, when a new idea suggested itself to the mothers of the town. They brought little children of

41) Barton, *Archeology and the Bible*, 329, note.

all sizes to Him, from infants in arms up, their request to Him being that He merely touch them, that is, put his hands upon them in blessing. There is no indication of a superstitious notion connected with the action. The children probably all loved the Savior at sight for His gentleness and kindness, and the hearts of the mothers were reached through the children. But here came interference from an unexpected quarter: the disciples harshly rebuked those that were bringing the children. They may have thought that the children were not worth while to bother with, and that the Lord needed the few moments' rest and should not be annoyed. No sooner, however, did Jesus notice this peculiar solicitude of the disciples than He, in turn, became much displeased, He was distinctly annoyed and said to them: Permit the children to come to Me; do not hinder them. He speaks as under the stress of extreme vexation. And He gives the reason for His stern command: The Kingdom belongs to such as these; it is of such as these that the kingdom of God is made up, of children and of such as have childlike, simple faith in Jesus the Savior. It is a powerful declaration concerning the ability of the children to grasp and know the essential truths pertaining to their salvation in a much better and surer way than that usually chosen by the adults. This truth He states also from the other side, confirming His declaration with a solemn oath. If any one does not accept the kingdom of God, Jesus the Savior, and the faith in Him which the Holy Spirit works in the heart, as a little child, he shall not enter that kingdom. And to emphasize His words still more strongly, the Lord did not hesitate to take the little ones up into His arms and into His bosom, and to bless them with the laying on of hands. "These verses no one will take from us, nor contradict them with valid reasons. For here it says that Christ wants it unforbidden to bring children to Him, yea, He commands them to be brought to Him, and He blesses them and gives them the kingdom of heaven; let us mark that well." 42) It is also worth while, at this point, to note what a Reformed commentator writes: "Though little children, they were capable of receiving Christ's blessings. If Christ embraced them, why should not His Church embrace them? Why not dedicate them to God by Baptism? — whether that be performed by sprinkling, washing, or immersion; for we need not dispute about the mode: on this point let every one be fully persuaded in his own mind. I confess it appears to me grossly heathenish and barbarous to see parents who profess to believe in that Christ who loves children, and among them those whose creed does not prevent them from using infant baptism, depriving their children of an ordinance by which no soul can prove that they cannot be profited, and, through an unaccountable bigotry or carelessness, withholding from them the privilege of even a nominal dedication to God; and yet these very persons are ready enough to fly for a minister to baptize their child when they suppose it to be at the point of death!" 43)

42) Luther, 11, 491.

The Rich Young Man. Mark 10, 17—31.

The question of obtaining eternal life: V. 17. **And when He was gone forth into the way, there came one running, and kneeled to Him, and asked Him, Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?** V. 18. **And Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou Me good? There is none good but One, that is, God.** V. 19. **Thou knowest the commandments, Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witnesss, Defraud not, Honor thy father and mother.** V. 20. **And he answered and said unto Him, Master, all these have I observed from my youth.** After the incident with the young children, Jesus continued His journey, He went out and forward on His way. The inevitableness of the Passion and the end of Christ's life is always indicated in the gospels. Here one, a certain man, according to Luke, 18, 18, a ruler, the chief elder of a synagog in the neighborhood, stopped the Lord. The man came running to Him, He was much disturbed and excited; He threw Himself down upon his knees before Jesus. As an elder of the synagog he was fully acquainted with the laws and traditions of the elders, with all the customary interpretation of the various observances in vogue among the Jews. But he derived no satisfaction from that knowledge, he found no peace for his soul in the round of works prescribed there. The new Teacher would probably be able to help him solve the serious problem which he was battling with, the question of how to obtain the assurance of peace with God. His cry is: Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life? It is a cry which thousands of anxious souls that have been taught the way of works and self-righteousness have echoed since, not only among the Jews, but in all church bodies where salvation by man's own deeds is taught, Acts 16, 30. Note: The man speaks of doing something, of earning, if possible; and he wants to be considered an heir of eternal life, one for whom the glories will be laid up in heaven, in safe-keeping. Jesus does not answer his question directly, but by skilful catechizing tries to lead him to the right understanding of his petition and its fulfilment. Taking up the man's address first, He asks him why he applies the attribute "good" to Him. Far from rejecting the appellation, Jesus accepts it at once, but He wants the young man to understand the full import of the word. In calling Jesus good, he attributed to Him a quality of God Himself,

43) Clarke, *Commentary*, 5, 322.

he placed Him on a level with God, all of which is right and good. God is good; Jesus is good: they are on the same level. Now as for his question, Jesus reminds him of the fulfilment of the Law, since the perfect keeping of God's commandments, as the ruler had learned, would give him the assurance of heaven. The Lord mentions a few of the precepts of the Moral Law, those against adultery, against murder, against theft and robbery, against false witness, against fraud, and that demanding obedience to the parents. Note: The sequence of the commandments is immaterial. Jesus mentions only such as pertain to the second table, since these are of such a nature that a person ought to be able to note his transgressions of them very readily. It takes comparatively little spiritual knowledge and understanding to note the faults in thoughts, words, and deeds that are committed against one's neighbor. Jesus had noted at once that this young man was fully satisfied with an external probity before men. People of his stamp must always be referred to the total keeping of the Law of God, when they live so securely in their self-righteousness. If this method works a proper knowledge of sin, then there will also be opportunity for the knowledge of Jesus as the Savior of sinners, and for faith in Him. In this case, the man coolly stated that he had kept all these commandments from his youth. He was still so thoroughly bound in spiritual blindness that he supposed an outward abstaining from the deeds of wickedness and darkness constituted the fulfilment of the Law. Here was true pharisaic conceit. It is the same experience which believers will have in their dealings with the self-righteous hypocrites of this world. If they live an outwardly moral life, then they believe they have fulfilled God's will, and think they will be acceptable on the last day. And they have never examined their heart to see the mass of filth and transgression to be found there.

The decision: V. 21. **Then Jesus, beholding him, loved him, and said unto him, One thing thou lackest: Go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven; and come, take up the cross, and follow Me.** V. 22. **And he was sad at that saying and went away grieved; for he had great possessions.** In spite of the young man's foolish answer, Jesus looked upon him earnestly, affectionately, He regarded him lovingly. He loved him, not only on account of his youth, his earnestness, and his evident sincerity, but because He wanted, if possible, to save his soul. The man was so utterly unconscious of his spiritual condition that only strong medicine would arouse him to a realization of his needs. He attacked him on his weakest side. Knowing that the man was rich, He told him that he should sell everything he had and give it to the poor. This giving up of the goods most dear to him, upon which he had set his heart, for the sake of the Lord, would assure him a treasure in heaven. And that would also make him a fit disciple of Jesus, one who would be true to his discipleship. This was the Lord's test to convince the man how far he still was from perfection, how badly he was yet lacking in the love toward God and toward his neighbor, how completely his heart was still bound up in his mammon. Perfect keeping of the Law is demanded of the whole world. Loving God above all things includes a full yielding to Him. Should He therefore demand, for the sake of the Kingdom, that we give up all our earthly possessions, yea, life itself, for His sake, and serve our neighbor in humility, there must be no hesitation on our part. This young man was not equal to the test. His face became overcast at the word of Jesus. With a sad face and a heavy heart he walked off. His great riches were his undoing, for upon them he had placed his affection. His amazed confusion at Christ's demand drove him away from the Savior. In a similar way thousands of people that have come into contact with the Gospel and the work of the Church are willing enough to listen, meanwhile priding themselves upon the perfection of their lives. But when a sacrifice is asked for the sake of the Savior, their zeal cools very rapidly. Then they lose interest in the work of the Church, and turn back to the life that offers them more for the present. But this life is not the end.

The lesson of riches: V. 23. **And Jesus looked round about and saith unto His disciples, How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!** V. 24. **And the disciples were astonished at His words. But Jesus answereth again and saith unto them, Children, how hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God!** V. 25. **It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.** Jesus looked round in the circle of the disciples to see what kind of an impression the incident had made on them. Then He said, very impressively, that those possessing riches would only with difficulty enter into the kingdom of God, come to faith, and finally get to heaven. And as the disciples wondered concerning these words, He repeated the saying, making it a little plainer for their benefit. Trusting in this world's goods makes it impossible for a person to enter into the kingdom of God. For under Him the rule holds good that a person may have this world's goods by God's blessing, for God distributes them as He sees fit. But, incidentally, those that are rich and are Christians at the same time, hold these goods as though they possessed them not. They consider themselves only the stewards of God, whom God has entrusted with more than others, and therefore will hold responsible in a greater measure. They are therefore not really rich in the sense which the

children of this world attach to the term. Jesus brings out the gravity of the situation still more emphatically by stating, in the form of an Oriental proverb, that it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God. This is in no way an exaggeration, for even as it is possible for any one to come to faith and remain faithful to the end only by the power of the Holy Ghost, so it is true especially in the case of such as have a special hobby on earth which they love, to which they cling. Such conduct, whether it concerns riches, or goods, or lusts, or wife, or children, hinders the work of the Spirit.

Jesus explains: V. 26. **And they were astonished out of measure, saying among themselves, Who, then, can be saved?** V. 27. **And Jesus looking upon them saith, With men it is impossible, but not with God; for with God all things are possible.** The disciples, by this time, were almost gasping with perturbation, with very excessive astonishment, saying one to another: Why, who, in that case, can be saved? It was the strongest expression as to man's utter inability to work out his own salvation that they had ever heard. They naturally must draw the conclusion. But Jesus gives them the explanation. Regeneration, conversion, faith is, in every case, a miracle of the grace of God. He is able to do what seems impossible before men. Through His Word He can change hearts of stone into hearts of flesh, children of Satan into His own dear children, heirs of damnation into heirs of heaven. Through His power, exerted through His means of grace, He is able also to tear the hearts away from the love of earthly things and let them rest in full satisfaction and complete contentment in their Savior.

The reward of the followers of Christ: V. 28. **Then Peter began to say unto Him, Lo, we have left all, and have followed Thee.** V. 29. **And Jesus answered and said, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands for My sake and the Gospel's** v. 30. **but he shall receive an hundredfold, now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions, and in the world to come eternal life.** V. 31. **But many that are first shall be last; and the last, first.** The incident they had just witnessed set the disciples to thinking. And Peter, always forward, whose heart had by no means been fully weaned from the things of this world, proposed a question, probably in the name of all the disciples. With meaning emphasis and with a backward look at the rich young man that had proved himself unequal to the test, he reminds Christ of the fact that they have left all they had behind and entered into His discipleship. But with all his self-consciousness, Peter did not quite dare to finish the question. But Jesus knew and understood. It was His mercy that had called Peter and all the disciples, and they were receiving every day of their discipleship under this wonderful Master more than they had left. But Jesus gave them a further reassurance. If one leaves all that has been dear to him in this world, all his relatives, his house, and all his goods, for the sake of the Redeemer and because of the Gospel, Christ's reward of mercy will be correspondingly great, yea, an hundredfold greater and richer than a person could expect. He that loves Christ and His service more than anything on earth, will receive a compensation far exceeding all that he can understand. Even in this world, in the riches of Christ and the Gospel and the Kingdom of Grace, relationships are established which are far closer and dearer than all blood-relationships of this world. And, in addition, there are richer goods, more wonderful, more lasting possessions that are gained here. They outlast this world. What if they are accompanied by persecutions from the children of this world! They are merely a relish, they merely enhance the value of the spiritual blessings in heavenly gifts which fall to the lot of the believers. And all these gifts merge into the still more wonderful possessions of eternal life, where the fulness of God's riches of mercy will be showered upon those that have remained faithful to the end. This hundredfold compensation, extending into the life beyond, is so certain that its not having been received presupposes the not having forsaken. The depth, fulness, and satisfying beauty of this reward of mercy cannot be adequately described with human language. But Christ adds a word of warning against security. A mere outward membership in the Church, though it may have begun in Baptism, is no guarantee of these blessings of mercy. And even if a person for the sake of the Lord has worked, suffered, sacrificed much, he should beware lest he put his trust in these works, and hope to gain heaven on the strength of his having done more than others. He that wants to earn anything before God with his works, and finally puts his trust in his works, falls from grace and has no place in the kingdom of heaven. But all poor sinners that hope to be saved by faith only will be received by the Friend and Savior of sinners.

Priority in Christ's Kingdom.

Mark 10, 32—45.

Third foretelling of the Passion: V. 32. **And they were in the way going up to Jerusalem; and Jesus went before them; and they were amazed; and as they followed, they were afraid. And He took again the Twelve, and began to tell them what things should happen unto Him,** v. 33. **saying, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man shall be delivered unto the chief priests and unto the scribes; and**

they shall condemn Him to death, and shall deliver Him to the Gentiles; v. 34. **and they shall mock Him, and shall scourge Him, and shall spit upon Him, and shall kill Him; and the third day He shall rise again.** The nearer they came to Jerusalem, the more clearly the object of Christ's journey was brought out by His bearing and by His words. They had spent some time in their journey down the valley of the Jordan, and had now crossed the river and were slowly ascending toward the range of hills, on one of which Jerusalem was situated. The bearing of Jesus became stranger as time went by. It was characterized by a resoluteness, by a firmness that troubled and astonished the apostles, and caused all those that followed Him to fear. The strong emotion under which He was laboring, the majesty and heroism which shone forth from His manner, the fact that He preferred to walk alone and ahead of them: all these factors filled all the disciples with fear and with forebodings of an impending calamity. In addition, He took the opportunity of impressing once more on His apostles the fact and the manner of His Passion. He took the Twelve aside, He wanted these, His intimates and His successors in the work of preaching, to realize that they must give up their carnal ideas of an earthly Messianic kingdom. The prophecy which He here spoke is more detailed than the foregoing ones. It specifies that the Jewish authorities would deliver Him into the hands of the Gentiles, the Romans; it enumerates the indignities which He would have to endure during His Passion: mocking, spitting, scourging. These facts were vivid, not in His imagination, but in His knowledge. But always, like a shining beacon, came the comforting assurance of the resurrection. By the constant repetition of this fact Jesus hoped to impress the disciples that they would remember it at the critical period.

The request of Zebedee's children: V. 35. **And James and John, the sons of Zebedee, come unto Him, saying, Master, we would that Thou shouldest do for us whatsoever we shall desire.** V. 36. **And He said unto them, What would ye that I should do for you?** V. 37. **They said unto Him, Grant unto us that we may sit, one on Thy right hand, and the other on Thy left hand, in Thy glory.** Jesus had, just before leaving Capernaum, given the apostles a lesson in humility, and tried to impress upon them the chief consideration in the kingdom of God, that of unselfish service. All the more unpleasant, in view of the fact that He was on the way to do the greatest service, to make the greatest sacrifice of all, this incident must have jarred upon Him. For about this time, while they were still in the neighborhood of the Jordan, Salome, the wife of Zebedee, and her two sons, James and John, came to Christ with a request. The mother spoke first, but was seconded by her sons. Jesus, in His kindness, made allowances for their weakness and heard their petition, which was not exactly distinguished by meekness. They asked very urgently that they might be allowed to occupy the places of honor, on the right and on the left hand of Jesus, in the Kingdom of Glory. We here see "that James and John comport themselves evilly beyond measure, since they simply want to force Christ the Lord to make something special of them before the other disciples. There is not only the shameful sin (which is unusually objectionable in the case of preachers), pride and their own honor; for he that regards his own honor, benefit, and the like, and models his preaching accordingly, will not do much good; but such people also have no idea what Christ and His kingdom really stand for. For they suppose that He will begin a worldly kingdom, like other worldly lords. That He wants to forgive sins and give eternal life, and that they are in need of it, of that they do not think, but suppose if they only are great princes and lords, they would have sufficient. And the other ten disciples are not much wiser or more pious. For on account of these things they begin a murmuring, and did not want to give the two brothers an advantage." 44)

Christ's gentle reprimand: V. 38. **But Jesus said unto them, Ye know not what ye ask; can ye drink of the cup that I drink of? and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?** V. 39. **And they said unto Him, We can. And Jesus said unto them, Ye shall indeed drink of the cup that I drink of; and with the baptism that I am baptized withal shall ye be baptized;** v. 40. **but to sit on My right hand and on My left hand is not Mine to give, but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared.** Jesus here shows a little of the wealth of kind consideration which He is always ready to give to those that sin from weakness. "He deals with them in the most gentle manner, does not give them a harsh word; but instructs them with all kindness that they desist from their request and have other thoughts of His kingdom and their ministry, as a father admonishes his children in all goodness." 45) In order to do this, He asks them whether they think they are able to drain the cup of suffering which would shortly be offered to Him, and be baptized with the baptism of blood which would soon be His lot. They answered in the affirmative, not knowing what they were affirming. "That is Christ the Lord's kingdom, and He Himself, the King in this kingdom, opens the work. He drinks the cup, that is, He suffers, and suffers more and more severely than all His subjects, as we see from His gospel. Such example all those must follow who acknowledge Christ as their Head and Lord, as

44) Luther, 13a, 1198.
45) Luther, 13a, 1199.

Paul says to the Romans, 8, 17, that we must become like to the image of the Son of God in suffering, and thereupon in glory." 46) The same cup they would not and could not drink, in spite of their protestations. But they would learn to imitate Him in following the road of suffering and death after Him, and for His sake, for that is the Christian's lot and the Christian's distinction, incidentally also his assurance that God is a loving, kind Father. "For when Christ, our dear Lord, offers us His cup and wants to baptize us with His baptism, that is, when He lays His cross upon us, we are apt to conclude that such cup and baptism is an indication that God is angry with us and does not mean well with us. For thus reason looks upon it: if one is happy and everything goes well, he has a gracious God; but he with whom things do not go well, he has an ungracious God. But here we see that this judgment is wrong. For Christ Himself drinks the cup and permits Himself to be baptized; and yet He is God's dear child, in whom the Father has the highest and greatest pleasure, and with whom He cannot be angry. Now Christ has only the best and kindest intentions toward His Christians, for otherwise He would not have given Himself into death for them. . . . Therefore the Christians should have no horror of the cross, but should rather (as it is in truth) accept it as a sure sign that they are God's children and in the kingdom of Christ." 47) At the same time Christ, gently, but firmly, informs them that the fulfilment is a matter of the majestic counsel of God. He has prepared the places of honor and selected those that are to occupy them. As the entire salvation is a matter of God's mercy, so also are the rewards of mercy. They cannot be distributed as earthly monarchs and rulers dispense their bounty, according to the whim of the moment.

Another lesson in humility: V. 41. **And when the ten heard it, they began to be much displeased with James and John.** V. 42. **But Jesus called them to Him, and saith unto them, Ye know that they which are accounted to rule over the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and their great ones exercise authority upon them.** V. 43. **But so shall it not be among you; but whosoever will be great among you shall be your minister;** v. 44. **and whosoever of you will be the chiefest shall be servant of all.** V. 45. **For even the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many.** The other ten apostles had witnessed the entire incident with jealous apprehension and growing indignation. Not that they did not have the same aspirations, but that others had voiced them first and probably been near accomplishing their design. Jesus believed the time appropriate to repeat the lesson of a short time ago. He called the Twelve to Him, apart from the rest of the disciples that were with them. He then placed a contrast before them. Those who pass for, and are esteemed as, rulers by the Gentiles lord it over them, and the great ones of the world exercise dominion, use their power as they see fit, chiefly to enlarge their power. That is the case in earthly matters. But within the kingdom of Christ things are, or at least ought to be, far different. There greatness is measured, not by the amount of authority exercised, but by the amount of service rendered. The greater the service that is rendered, in unselfish humility, the higher will be the standing of a person in God's kingdom. The more thorough the self-abasement in the interest of one's neighbor and for love of Christ, the greater it will be accounted on God's credit slip. And in this the apostles and all Christians have the most glorious example before their eyes always: He, the great Lord of heaven, who came to earth as the Son of Man, who might have demanded and enforced the service of all creation, did not demand and accept this service, but Himself became the lowest servant of all. That was one object of His coming. And the other is closely connected with this. He freely gave His life as a ransom, as the price of redemption. His life, His blood, was given to pay the guilt of the whole world, and though there is a large number that reject His redemption, there are also, by His grace, many that believe on Him and are saved by such faith. "Mark especially the verse where Christ says: The Son of Man is come to give His life as a ransom for many. For this verse teaches . . . of the forgiveness of sins, and how we may obtain it. With our works and merit we are lost; for we owe God such a great sum that it is impossible for us to pay it. How may we then become rid of the guilt? In no other way but that our dear Lord Jesus Christ accepts our guilt and takes our sins from us and lays them on His back and suffers death, which we had earned by our sins, in order that we might be free and liberated from death." 48)

The Healing of Bartimaeus.

Mark 10, 46—52.

At Jericho: V. 46. **And they came to Jericho; and as He went out of Jericho with His disciples and a great number of people, blind Bartimaeus, the son of Timaeus, sat by the highwayside begging.** V. 47. **And when he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out and say, Jesus, Thou Son of David, have mercy on me.** V. 48. **And many charged him that he should hold his peace; but he cried the more a great deal, Thou Son of David, have mercy on me.** Mark here relates the healing of the blind man on the way out of

46) Luther, 13a, 1201.
47) Luther, 13a, 1203.
48) Luther, 13a, 1205.

Jericho. Luke tells the healing of one before they entered the city, Luke 18, 35. And Matthew takes both miracles together into one account, Matt. 20, 29. Jesus came to Jericho and stayed there at least for several hours. His coming and the occurrences during His stay raised quite a stir in the city, and therefore He was accompanied not only by His disciples, but also by a great multitude of people, to whom He spoke words of eternal life as they walked along the way. Near the gate of the city, at a place where all the people passed by, a blind beggar was sitting. Mark notes his name and also explains its meaning for the non-Jewish readers: Bartimaeus, the son of Timaeus. The noise of the multitude reached him, and he obtained the information that Jesus of Nazareth was passing by. Of Him and of His many miracles Bartimaeus had heard. He had come to the conclusion that the man who could perform such miracles and preach in such a wonderful, convincing way of the need of repentance and of believing, must be the Son of David, in the special, Messianic sense; the Prophet of Galilee was the promised Messiah, Matt. 9, 27; 12, 23; 21, 9. Acting upon this certainty, he called out aloud to Him, pleading for mercy and help. And when many people in the crowd, impatient with His whining and crying, bade him hold his peace, he cried all the louder: Jesus, Thou Son of David, have mercy on me! He would not be denied. Mark well: Jesus undoubtedly knew of the man's presence there, even before he cried the first time, but He permitted him to call once and then again. He wants persistence in prayer, He is delighted with importunity of the right kind. Not to grow weary in pleading with Jesus is the secret of success in obtaining spiritual and also temporal gifts.

The healing: V. 49. **And Jesus stood still, and commanded him to be called. And they call the blind man, saying unto him, Be of good comfort, rise; He calleth thee.** V. 50. **And he, casting away his garment, rose, and came to Jesus.** V. 51. **And Jesus answered and said unto him, What wilt thou that I should do unto thee? The blind man said unto him, Lord, that I might receive my sight.** V. 52. **And Jesus said unto him, Go thy way; thy faith hath made thee whole. And immediately he received his sight, and followed Jesus in the way.** Jesus was now satisfied as to the man's sincerity and faith. As soon as He expressed the wish to see the blind man, there was a marked change in the attitude of the people. Probably the very ones that were so insistent in bidding the beggar hush now showed him every attention. Undoubtedly the expectation of a miracle also stimulated them to greater activity and kindness. They call to the blind man from all sides: Courage, rise, He calls you! They are now eager with their assistance — absolutely true to life. The effect of all this on the beggar was electrifying: having thrown away his mantle and having jumped to his feet, he came to Jesus, assisted by willing hands. Upon the Lord's question, he has only one plea, uttered now with an air of confident expectation. He was sure that the Son of David could help him, and he did not doubt that the Messiah would help him, if He so wished: Rabbuni, that my eyes might be opened. Jesus knew his faith and treated him accordingly. He dismissed him with the words: Thy faith has saved thee, made thee whole. Because of his faith, the Lord had heard his prayer, for faith is the greatest force in the world. Immediately the miracle was performed, and the former blind man now joined the disciples and followed Jesus as He went on His way toward Jerusalem. This remarkable cure is another proof, not only of the sovereign might, but also of the benevolence of Jesus. His kindness and compassion are His most prominent characteristics in this story, a fact which redounds also to our comfort.

Summary. *Jesus gives a lesson on marriage and divorce, blesses little children that are brought to Him, is interviewed by the rich young man and applies the lesson of the incident, makes another prediction concerning His Passion, gently reprimands the sons of Zebedee and all His apostles for their ambition, and heals blind Bartimaeus.*

CHAPTER 11.

Christ's Entry into Jerusalem.

Mark 11, 1—11.

Preparing for the entry: V. 1. **And when they came nigh to Jerusalem, unto Bethphage and Bethany, at the Mount of Olives, He sendeth forth two of His disciples,** v. 2. **and saith unto them, Go your way into the village over against you; and as soon as ye be entered into it, ye shall find a colt tied whereon never man sat; loose him, and bring him.** V. 3. **And if any man say unto you, Why do ye this? say ye that the Lord hath need of him; and straightway he will send him hither.** Jesus had probably reached Bethany, on the Jericho road, on Friday evening or Saturday morning. It was a small town located on the southeastern slope of the Mount of Olives, and about a mile and a quarter from Jerusalem. Beyond the town, on its east side, the road descends quite abruptly into the Jordan Valley. Next to it, on the road to Jerusalem, was a small hamlet or group of

farm-buildings, called Bethphage. Jesus left the home of His friends in Bethany early on Sunday morning. As He reached the outskirts of the town, He called two of His disciples to Him and commissioned them for a peculiar service. They were to go to the hamlet which was just before them, which Christ's entire company was about to enter. Without delay, without trouble or difficulty, they would there find a colt tied in a certain place, upon which no person had ever sat. It was a solemn, important mission, foretold even by the prophets. For sacred purposes only unused animals could be employed, Num. 19, 2; 1 Sam. 6, 7. This colt they should untie from the post and then lead it to Jesus. The directions are very exact and circumstantial, that no mistake is possible. It may, of course, happen that the owner of the animal would object to this proceeding. In that event they were to tell the owner: The Lord has need of him. When He, the great Creator and Master of heaven and earth, is in need of anything, it must be forthcoming: any and every creature can be pressed into His service. But, incidentally, the Lord did not abuse His power. He knew that the owner would send the animal, but he also promised, by His messengers, that the foal would be returned without delay, after He had had His use of it. This feature serves to enhance the lowliness of Jesus at His entry: on a borrowed colt, which He has promised to return at once, He rides into the capital city of His nation.

The disciples carry out the order: V. 4. **And they went their way, and found the colt tied by the door without in a place where two ways met; and they loose him.** V. 5. **And certain of them that stood there said unto them, What do ye, loosing the colt?** V. 6. **And they said unto them even as Jesus had commanded; and they let them go.** V. 7. **And they brought the colt to Jesus, and cast their garments on him; and He sat upon him.** The disciples carried out Christ's instructions. Coming to the hamlet or group of farm buildings, they followed the road around the farmyard. And there, tied to the door, probably of a stable, or at the door-post of a larger building in the square of the hamlet, they found the colt, which they promptly proceeded to unloose. Some of those that were standing near by, very likely some of the laborers of the place, objected and asked for an explanation. But the disciples used the words which Jesus had taught them. And so the men, having full assurance that the beast would be safely and speedily restored to the owner, gave them leave to lead the colt off. And so they brought the animal to Jesus, throwing their mantles upon him for a saddle, so that Jesus could sit upon the colt.

The reception of Christ: V. 8. **And many spread their garments in the way; and others cut down branches off the trees, and strewed them in the way.** V. 9. **And they that went before, and they that followed, cried, saying, Hosanna! Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord.** V. 10. **Blessed be the kingdom of our father David, that cometh in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest!** V. 11. **And Jesus entered into Jerusalem and into the Temple; and when He had looked round about upon all things, and now the eventide was come, He went out unto Bethany with the Twelve.** Meanwhile the news that the Prophet of Galilee, Jesus of Nazareth, was coming to the city had spread in Jerusalem. Not only were the pilgrims from Galilee anxious to see Him, but those also from other parts of Palestine where He had been active in His ministry, or where His fame had spread. A peculiar kind of excitement, a form of exultation, took hold of the multitude. In large numbers they flocked forth from the city to meet Him. Those that came early fell in behind Him; those that came later turned around and marched ahead of Him along the road over the brow of the Mount of Olives. Many of these took their mantles, their holiday dresses, and spread them on the way, as at the reception of a great king. Others took the branches of trees, with the first young leaves, and the palm-branches which they bore in their hands, and strewed them on the way. Still others cut off branches from trees in the fields along the road. And when the excitement reached its height, the people broke forth into snatches of antiphonal singing from the great Hallel, Ps. 117; 118, 25. 26. Many of the customs of one great festival were transferred to the other festivals. Thus here the carrying of the palm-branches and other green foliage, the loud exultation, the public singing of the Hosanna, all were features and customs of the Feast of Tabernacles. The people here confessed Jesus as the Son of David, as the Messiah of Israel, whose kingdom was about to be established. The Spirit of the Lord had here, for a few moments, taken hold of the masses. God wanted to give His Son this open testimony concerning His mission, and incidentally point forward to the day when all tongues will be obliged to confess that Jesus is the Lord, to the glory of God the Father. The entire incident of the entry of Christ into Jerusalem, as it is related in the gospels, is a type of the merciful advent of Jesus into the hearts of His believers, which continues throughout the time of the New Testament. Christ is now exalted at the right hand of God, but He still comes by His Spirit, through His means of grace. He still reigns and lives in His Church and brings to all His subjects mercy, salvation, and peace, all the great benefits which He has earned through His suffering and death.

When Jesus reached Jerusalem, He went up to the Temple. He spent the rest of the afternoon in looking around carefully, with a keenly observant eye. He noted carefully the manner

in which the entire worship was done; He marked the traffic which was being carried on in the Court of the Gentiles. But the hour was getting late, and so He went out with the Twelve to Bethany, where He lodged.

The Miracle of the Fig-Tree.

Mark 11, 12—26.

The curse upon the tree: V. 12. **And on the morrow, when they were come from Bethany, He was hungry;** v. 13. **and seeing a fig-tree afar off having leaves, He came, if haply He might find anything thereon; and when He came to it, He found nothing but leaves; for the time of figs was not yet.** V. 14. **And Jesus answered and said unto it, No man eat fruit of thee hereafter forever. And His disciples heard it.** So eager, so concerned, was Jesus about the work of His ministry and about various other matters that had come to His attention that He did not even take time to eat on Monday morning. On their way from Bethany to Jerusalem He felt the pangs of hunger. There was a fig-tree growing by the side of the road, which was in full foliage, though the season was early. But when Jesus went over to it, either to find some of last year's late figs, which sometimes matured in the spring, or to find fruit of the new crop, He was disappointed. All the strength of the tree had gone into foliage; there were no figs. This tree was a type and picture of the Jewish people, and Christ's purpose in performing this peculiar miracle was to bring the attention of His disciples to that fact. The Jews also had the form of godliness, while they denied its power. Three years the Lord had worked in the midst of this nation, in the North and in the South, but there was little evidence of any results. The great majority of the people wanted nothing of the Messiah. There was much profession of religion, much boasting of being God's own, peculiar people, but no real, tangible proof of a worship in spirit and in truth. And so this nation, which God had chosen as His own, would become subject to the curse, just as Jesus here pronounced the curse upon its type, the barren fig-tree. Mark notes that the disciples heard the words of Jesus as He spoke to the tree.

The second cleansing of the Temple: V. 15. **And they come to Jerusalem; and Jesus went into the Temple, and began to cast out them that sold and bought in the Temple, and overthrew the tables of the money-changers and the seats of them that sold doves,** v. 16. **and would not suffer that any man should carry any vessel through the Temple.** V. 17. **And He taught, saying unto them, Is it not written, My house shall be called of all nations the house of prayer? But ye have made it a den of thieves.** V. 18. **And the scribes and chief priests heard it, and sought how they might destroy Him; for they feared Him, because all the people was astonished at His doctrine.** V. 19. **And when even was come, He went out of the city.** As soon as Jesus and His disciples had reached the city on Monday morning, He went up to the Temple. He lost no time in carrying out a plan which He had formulated over night. Once before He had attempted to impress upon the Temple authorities the need of having some regard to the holiness of God's house, John 2, 13—16. And here He saw the same pollution of the holy places which had so enraged Him before. Again, therefore, in holy wrath, He purged the Temple. The sellers and buyers that were gathered in the Court of the Gentiles He drove away. The tables of the money-changers, of the petty bankers, and the seats of those that sold doves He upset. A vivid picture: The lowing of the cattle and the bleating of the sheep, the fluttering of the released doves and the angry cries of the bankers, all mingling in a commotion of endless confusion as they sought to escape from the wrath of Jesus, whose majestic figure dominated the scene and forbade any interference. This traffic, which had grown out of a permission to such as could not bring their sacrificial animals great distances, had, like many other permitted customs, become a nuisance of the first rank, threatening the sanctity of the holy place itself. For once, Jesus cleaned out the pollution of those that served their own belly and their money-bags more than the holy name of God. After the Temple-court had once more been purged of the invaders, Jesus would not even allow any one to carry any instrument or tool through the Temple, using it as a short cut. He felt that the sacredness of the place forbade such a proceeding. He then taught the people, in explanation of His act, by referring to Scriptures, Is. 56, 7; Jer. 7, 11. Should they consider and treat the house that was called after His name like a den of thieves, where trafficking, and cheating, and robbing might be carried on unhindered? The real object, the proper use of this house, was that of a house of prayer unto all nations, 1 Kings 8.

This act of Jesus again aroused and embittered the high priests and the scribes. They planned and sought means by which they might put Him out of the way. Their counsels against Him were held with increasing frequency. But they did not dare lay hands upon Him, for the people were simply carried away by admiration of His doctrine, since He taught simply, but effectively, what was written in the Scriptures. But when evening was come, perhaps soon after the time of the evening sacrifice, He again left the city to lodge with friends.

The lesson of the dead tree: V. 20. **And in the morning, as they passed by, they saw the fig-tree dried up from the roots.** V. 21. **And Peter calling to remembrance, saith unto Him, Master, behold, the fig-tree which Thou cursedst is withered away.**

V. 22. **And Jesus, answering, saith unto them, Have faith in God.** V. 23. **For verily I say unto you, That whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea, and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass, he shall have whatsoever he saith.** It was on Tuesday morning that Jesus again passed by the fig-tree with His disciples. The curse of Jesus had taken effect; the whole tree, from the roots, was withered and dead. On the evening before things had been in shadow, and therefore the apostles could easily overlook the condition of the tree, especially since their minds were likely occupied with other matters. But in the clear morning light the tree stood out from the rest so prominently that Peter remembered the incident of the day before. In a half-pleased and half-awed manner he called the Lord's attention to the result of His curse. Jesus then proceeds to give the disciples a second lesson from the miracle, one applicable to themselves and to the Christians of all times. He impresses upon them His favorite topic, next to the proclamation of the Gospel. Faith in God, trust towards God, absolute reliance upon Him is required in the kingdom of Christ. Solemnly He declares to them that such a trust has mountain-moving properties, that nothing can withstand it. But the confidence must be absolute, unqualified, not tinged by the slightest doubt. With God's command and promise before us, nothing is impossible. A Christian in most cases does not attain the object that he is striving for because there is some apprehension, some doubt in his heart as to the possibility of carrying out the plan. Such vacillating, uncertain natures defeat the ends of faith. And the tool and weapon of faith, by which it accomplishes its great deeds and wins its victories, as Jesus impresses upon His disciples, is prayer.

V. 24. **Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them.** V. 25. **And when ye stand praying, forgive if ye have aught against any, that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses.** V. 26. **But if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses.** There are two factors which defeat the ends of prayer. The first is the lack of trust in efficacy of prayer. There are things which people need, which they desire, which they bring to God in prayer, and yet they lack assurance, they exhibit hesitation, fear as to the outcome. But Christ here states that every prayer of faith is heard. It may be that the fulfilment of wishes comes in a different form than the believer anticipated, in a manner more conducive to his temporal and eternal welfare, but the fact of God's hearing prayer is unassailable. The second reason why prayers often have no effect is because of the condition of the person's heart that presumes to pray. There cannot be, in the heart of a praying person, enmity, hatred, rancor, ill will, or any other unfriendly feeling which is at variance with the demand of God that a forgiving spirit must dominate our actions. No matter whether Christians have been wronged with or without reason, whether they feel hurt rightfully or wrongfully, their hearts must be filled with forgiveness toward all men. If they refuse to forgive, no matter what the occasion or the provocation, they thereby erect a wall, an impenetrable and insurmountable obstacle between themselves and God. They make God's forgiveness of their own sins impossible, and God will not hear the prayers of such as have no clean record before Him, whose sins are not daily and richly forgiven them through the Gospel. Since they refuse their neighbor forgiveness, they shut themselves out from God's mercy and goodness, and render their prayer of none effect.

The Question concerning Christ's Authority. Mark 11, 27—33.

Christ's authority challenged: V. 27. **And they come again to Jerusalem; and as He was walking in the Temple, there come to Him the chief priests and the scribes and the elders,** v. 28. **and say unto Him, By what authority doest Thou these things? and who gave Thee this authority to do these things?** By this time the death of Jesus had been definitely decided upon by the Jewish authorities. Daily they had been having sessions to consider ways and means of carrying out their intention; for it was merely a question of finding a favorable opportunity, since they feared to use power on account of the attitude of the people toward Jesus. The temper of a crowd is always uncertain, and they were awaiting developments with some anxiety. In the mean time they dogged the footsteps of Jesus as He came to the Temple on this Tuesday morning. And they could not refrain from nagging. This method, they felt, would effect at least so much, that He could not be teaching the people. In full force they surround Him, the high priests and the scribes and the elders, probably just as they had come out of the council-chamber. Their aim is to disconcert Him by challenging His right, His authority for yesterday's action. They did not attempt to hide their displeasure over His entire manner of speaking and doing things; they resented the implication that He was the Lord of the Temple.

The effective counter-question of Jesus: V. 29. **And Jesus answered and said unto them, I will also ask of you one question, and answer Me, and I will tell you by what authority I do these things.** V. 30. **The baptism of John, was it from heaven or of men? Answer Me.** V. 31. **And they reasoned with themselves, saying, If we shall**

say, From heaven, He will say, Why, then, did ye not believe him? V. 32. But if we shall say, Of men, they feared the people; for all men counted John that he was a prophet indeed. V. 33. And they answered and said unto Jesus, We cannot tell. And Jesus, answering, saith unto them, Neither do I tell you by what authority I do these things. Jesus was perfectly willing to give them an account of Himself and of all His actions in the Temple, under one condition. He had one single matter concerning which He desired information from them. If they would answer Him about that, He would be glad to tell them by what authority He was performing His miracles, teaching the people and purging the Temple. The question that Jesus proposed proved a dilemma to the Jewish chiefs: Whether the work of John the Baptist, specifically his baptizing, was done by orders from heaven, from God, or on his own responsibility. This was a poser for them. For, as they reasoned among themselves in their perplexity, if they should say: From heaven, then the obvious retort would be: For what reason, then, did you refuse him belief? On the other hand: But, suppose we say, from men? This they also did not dare to answer, for they were afraid of the multitude, for all of the common people sincerely held that John was a prophet. In either direction there lay trouble for them, and so they preferred not to answer; whereupon Jesus informed them that He also would not answer their challenge. Their conscience told them that, if even the baptism of John was from heaven, then the ministry of Jesus with His wonderful miracles and powerful preaching must surely have authority from God. Thus unbelief is objectionable even from the standpoint of mere moral reasoning. The unbelievers cannot deny the power of the Word, but refuse to bow to the truth of it. And so, when driven to bay, they make use of lies, evasions, and excuses.

Summary. *Jesus makes His triumphal entry into Jerusalem, performs the miracle of the fig-tree, purges the Temple, explains to His disciples the lesson of the dead tree, and answers the challenge of the Jewish authorities concerning His right to do these things.*

CHAPTER 12.

The Parable of the Vineyard.

Mark 12, 1—12.

The vineyard: **V. 1. And He began to speak unto them by parables. A certain man planted a vineyard, and set an hedge about it, and digged a place for the wine-fat, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into a far country.** For some time now Jesus had not used the parabolic style of teaching, mainly because He had been teaching His disciples alone. But now He began, He resumed this form of presenting the truth which He wanted to impress, principally upon His enemies that had been challenging His authority. Of the parables which Jesus spoke on that Tuesday, Mark relates only one, that one in which the wickedness of the contemplated murder is shown in the proper light. A vineyard a certain man planted. It was a man of wealth, and incidentally a good business man, as the details of the plan show. Having put in his vines, he drew or set a hedge around the plat to keep out the wild animals. He not only built a wine-press for the treading out of the grapes, but he also constructed under it the vat for receiving the juices that flowed from the wine-press. Finally he built a tower, to serve both for storing the fruit and for watching against thieves and birds. Having thus done all that could be expected of an owner, he let it out, he rented it to certain husbandmen, gardeners, and went on a far journey. The parallelism between this story and that of Is. 5, 1—7 must have been evident to the scribes at once. This made the effect of the parable all the more damaging.

The wicked husbandmen: **V. 2. And at the season he sent to the husbandmen a servant that he might receive from the husbandmen of the fruit of the vineyard. V. 3. And they caught him, and beat him, and sent him away empty. V. 4. And again he sent unto them another servant; and at him they cast stones, and wounded him in the head, and sent him away shamefully handled. V. 5. And again he sent another; and him they killed, and many others; beating some and killing some. V. 6. Having yet therefore one son, his well-beloved, he sent him also last unto them, saying, They will reverence my son. V. 7. But those husbandmen said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and the inheritance shall be ours. V. 8. And they took him, and killed him, and cast him out of the vineyard.** At the season, at the appointed time, when the first-fruits were about to be expected, the owner sent a servant as his representative. The amount agreed upon was to be collected, either in the form of fruit, or of a specified sum of rent money, in accordance with the contract. But instead of living up to their contract, the wicked husbandmen caught hold of the servant, gave him a thorough beating, and turned him away without a cent. The master was patient. He sent another servant, with the result that they treated the representative with every sign of disrespect and contempt, wounding him about the head and otherwise making short work of him. A third servant was killed outright. And so matters continued for some time, the owner

sending servants, and the husbandmen maltreating, beating, or killing them. Note how the evangelist piles up the records against the husbandmen, as he summarizes the parable of Christ. Mark also how the patience of the owner stands out in the account. Now the master had an only son, whom he loved dearly, and who would incidentally be his heir. Him he sent as the last one to these men, with the hope and expectation that they must surely feel a certain amount of reverence for him, since he so obviously represented the master and was entitled to full honor as the future lord of the vineyard. But the wicked husbandmen discussed the matter among themselves; they wanted to get possession of the vineyard, they wanted to rule in it as they pleased, they wanted to enjoy all its produce without interference. So they planned to kill the heir and calmly take possession of the property. This plan they carried out; when the son of the owner came, they admitted him to the vineyard, but then cast him out and killed him, or they cast out his body after having killed him.

This was the gruesome parable that the Lord told the elders, and chief priests, and scribes. Its explanation is evident. The owner of the vineyard is God Himself. The vineyard is His kingdom, which He had planted in Israel. Through the covenant which He had made with this people in the wilderness He had accepted them as His peculiar people. And He had taken the very best care of His nation. He had separated them from the Gentiles, He had given them the strong hedge of His Law, He had set the kingdom and dynasty of David as their strong tower against all enemies, and in the Temple at Jerusalem the rich wine of God's mercy flowed in streams. But history shows how the chosen people of God repaid His mercies, for the husbandmen are the individual members of the Jewish Church, but especially their religious leaders. All of these God admonished and warned, again and again, to bring forth fruit that measured up to the standard of God's mercy. But His prophets were treated with contempt, they were abused, as Elijah, Elisha, Jeremiah; they were even put to death, Matt. 23, 35; Heb. 11, 36—38. And still God's patience was not exhausted. In accordance with His eternal plan of love He sent His own, His only beloved Son, Matt. 3, 17; Mark 9, 7. But Him the leaders of the people were even now planning to kill and would carry out their evil design in only a few days. The result, the final outcome, is even now present with Christ. They were jealous of the authority and power of Jesus, they wanted to have the heritage for themselves to do with it as they pleased.

The application of the parable: V. 9. **What shall therefore the lord of the vineyard do? He will come and destroy the husbandmen, and will give the vineyard unto others.** V. 10. **And have ye not read this Scripture: The stone which the builders rejected is become the head of the corner;** v. 11. **this was the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes?** V. 12. **And they sought to lay hold on Him, but feared the people; for they knew that He had spoken the parable against them. And they left Him and went their way.** The vivid presentation of Christ in bringing out the cowardliness, greed, and cruelty of the wicked husbandmen must have been most impressive. And so the question which He presented at the climax of the story must have forced the answer in their minds, even if they did not all voice it aloud: He will come and destroy those husbandmen, and give the vineyard to others. The Lord spoke the judgment which His parable forced from the lips of His hearers. Note: The vineyard must not be left desolate after the destruction of the wicked men; it is still capable of producing much fruit if properly cultivated. The evangelists and apostles brought in many a rich result of their labors, even before the destruction of Jerusalem. To bring out the point of His story still more strongly, Jesus refers to a passage of the Psalms, a verse from the great Hallel which the Jews sang so proudly at their great festivals, Ps. 118, 22. The stone which the builders rejected, repudiated, thought of no value for their building, for the Church of God, this very one has become the corner-stone, on which the whole building rests, without which it would be insecure and could not stand. This fact is indeed wonderful in our eyes, just as it is represented by Isaiah, 53, 2. 3. The Jews rejected Christ, the Messiah, they delivered Him into the hands of the heathen to be killed, but Jesus arose from the dead and thus became the foundation and corner-stone of the New Testament Church. In Him, and in Him only, there is salvation. Trust in Him as the Savior of the world is absolutely essential for membership in the body which is named after Him.

The obvious application of the parable and of the Scripture-passage to which Jesus referred angered the Jewish authorities beyond measure. They tried most anxiously to lay hold upon Him, but their fear of the people restrained them, as on the day before, chapter 11, 18. Even this earnest admonition did not have any effect upon their calloused hearts; their hatred of Jesus did not permit any feeling of repentance to arise. They felt the sting of the parable and, being foiled in all their attempts to harm Jesus, they gnashed their teeth in helpless rage and marched off.

Various Questions Proposed to Jesus.

Mark 12, 13—34.

The question of tribute: V. 13. **And they send unto Him certain of the Pharisees and of the Herodians to catch Him in His words.** V. 14. **And when they were come, they say unto Him, Master, we know that Thou art true and carest for no man; for**

Thou regardest not the person of men, but teachest the way of God in truth: Is it lawful to give tribute to Caesar, or not? V. 15. **Shall we give, or shall we not give? But He, knowing their hypocrisy, said unto them, Why tempt ye Me? Bring Me a penny that I may see it.** V. 16. **And they brought it. And He saith unto them, Whose is this image and superscription? And they said unto Him, Caesar's.** V. 17. **And Jesus, answering, said unto them, Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's. And they marveled at Him.** Having been worsted in the first encounter, the Jewish chiefs lost no time in planning a second attack. They sent to Him, without delay, some keen-minded Pharisees, whose training in sophistical reasoning made them especially valuable at this time, and a few members of the clique of Herodians, whose hopes for the house of Herod made them strong enemies of the Messianic mission of Christ. Cp. Matt. 22, 16. Here ecclesiastical and political ambition was represented, joined in opposition to Christ. They had been instructed and drilled in the part they were to play with great care. With smug hypocrisy and obsequious flattery they come to Jesus. They literally wanted to catch Him with their question, or with His reply. They present their trap with honeyed bait: We know that Thou art truthful, not afraid to say the truth at any time, also that no man's person would deter Thee from saying what Thou believest to be right. But now the wolf shows his fangs: Is it right, is it the lawful thing, should it be done at all times, that census-tribute be paid to the Emperor: or, more urgently: Shall we pay it or not? But their snare was too visible, to the omniscient Christ, above all. They hoped His answer would, in either event, prove His undoing. Should He answer in the negative, the government officials could be informed to that effect; should He answer in the positive, the people, that hated the Roman yoke, could easily be turned against Him. But the Lord read the hypocrisy on their faces, in their words, in their hearts, and told them plainly that He knew their intention. Still He does not deny them an answer. Fetch Me a denarius, He tells them, that I may see. In order to make them feel the disgrace of their action, He acts as though He must make a special study of this grave matter. "The most common Roman silver coin was the denarius, rendered in the Authorized Version 'penny' and in the Revised Version 'shilling.' Its weight varied at different times. In the time of Christ it weighed about 61.3 grains Troy, and was worth 16⅔ cents of American money. As the ministry of Christ occurred in the reign of Tiberius, the tribute money shown to Christ was probably a denarius of Tiberius." 49) When they had brought the coin and had given the information that the image and the inscription was that of Caesar, His conclusion and answer were brief: The things of Caesar render to Caesar, and those of God to God. This rule applies at all times and is invaluable in maintaining the proper distinction between Church and State. God's people, the believers of all times, will, above all, give due honor, render due obedience, to God. In things which concern God, the service of God, faith, and conscience, we are obedient to God alone and permit no man to interfere. But in worldly, civil matters, where money, possessions, body, life are concerned, the Christians will cheerfully obey the government. With these words the Lord has incidentally laid down the distinction which is to be observed between the kingdom of God and the authority of the State, He has here forbidden the State to interfere in Church matters, and the Church to meddle with the business of the government.

The question of the Sadducees: V. 18. **Then come unto Him the Sadducees, which say there is no resurrection; and they asked Him, saying,** v. 19. **Master, Moses wrote unto us, If a man's brother die, and leave his wife behind him, and leave no children, that his brother should take his wife, and raise up seed unto his brother.** V. 20. **Now there were seven brethren; and the first took a wife, and dying left no seed.** V. 21. **And the second took her and died, neither left he any seed; and the third likewise.** V. 22. **And the seven had her and left no seed. Last of all the woman died also.** V. 23. **In the resurrection, therefore, when they shall rise, whose wife shall she be of them? For the seven had her to wife.** The Herodians and the Pharisees had been obliged to retreat with little glory. Now come the Sadducees, the deniers of the resurrection of the dead. They hope to have much better success. In fact, their confident manner is tinged with facetiousness, as though they were perpetrating a huge joke upon the Galilean Rabbi. They had no idea that the joke would be turned upon them so quickly and easily. They preface their remarks with the announcement that Moses had given them a certain precept. They were referring to the so-called levirate marriage, "the ancient custom of marriage between a man and the widow of his brother, required by the Mosaic law when there was no male issue." Deut. 25, 5—10. Whether their story was taken from facts or fancy is immaterial. They recite it with much circumstantial detail, to make it all the more ridiculous by the long explanation. Seven brothers, one after another, had this woman for their wife. Surely the situation at the time of resurrection, in case all the seven should claim her for wife, would be disagreeable, to say the least. Arguments of this kind are being used by unbelievers even to the present day; their great wisdom will not permit

49) Barton, *Archeology and the Bible*, 165.

them to believe in such an unreasonable fact as the resurrection of the dead.

The decisive answer of Jesus: V. 24. **And Jesus, answering, said unto them, Do ye not therefore err because ye know not the Scriptures, neither the power of God?** V. 25. **For when they shall rise from the dead, they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels which are in heaven.** V. 26. **And as touching the dead, that they rise: have ye not read in the book of Moses how in the bush God spake unto him, saying, I am the God of Abraham and the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob?** V. 27. **He is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living; ye therefore do greatly err.** The question which Jesus uses: Do ye not err on account of this fact? is stronger than a positive statement as to their wrong belief and argument. He says, in effect: Don't you see how absolutely foolish you are in your belief and in your discussion? The point of your story is based upon a wrong supposition. Two grave facts must be noted against the Sadducees and all that follow them in similar arguments: 1) They do not know the Scriptures; 2) they do not know the power of God. Most of the most rabid and radical enemies of the Bible-truths have never even read the Bible, and yet they presume to judge it in the minutest details. And they have no conception of the great power of God; their finite minds cannot grasp infinity, and yet they make futile attempts to make matters beyond their ken clear to themselves and to others by theories that are subject to change without notice. Marrying and giving in marriage will no longer be practised in heaven, after the resurrection. All physical needs will then be ended definitely, and all the believers in bliss will be sexless. The terms male and female, husband and wife, will no longer be in use, because there will be no need of them. The loved ones will be in heaven, not in the former relation of blood, but in the closer, happier relation of spirit, in union with Christ the Savior. But Jesus gives the Sadducees a lesson also concerning the resurrection of the dead. Since they rejected all the Old Testament writings but the five books of Moses, He takes His proof from one of these, from Ex. 3, 6. 15. In speaking to Moses at the burning bush, God expressly called Himself the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob. All of these patriarchs, at this time, had died, and they were presumably dead, so far as men could see and judge. But, Jesus explains to the Sadducees, the fact that God so designates Himself, shows that these men, though dead in body, were yet alive, that their soul, the most essential part of them, was alive. The living God is the God of the living only, His work concerns the living only. This is true of all believers. All, to whom the Lord is God, live unto God, even when they have closed their eyes in temporal death. Death, to them, is only a temporary sleep, in the midst of which God considers them as living. And therefore God will truly awaken all the dead that have fallen asleep in Him to a new and blessed life in all eternity.

The foremost commandment: V. 28. **And one of the scribes came, and having heard them reasoning together, and perceiving that He had answered them well, asked Him, Which is the first commandment of all?** V. 29. **And Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel: The Lord, our God, is one Lord;** v. 30. **and thou shalt love the Lord, thy God, with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment.** V. 31. **And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these.** It was not a mere harmless question or request for information which this scribe here uttered. He was rather one of the sharp-witted ones of the Pharisees, whose object was to tempt Christ and lead Him to make a statement which would in some way compromise Him. But it spoke in this man's favor that he realized and was conscious that Jesus answered them well. Approaching, therefore, he put his question as to which was the first of all commandments. If Christ had singled out a separate precept, He might have been charged with unwarranted emphasis upon some individual form to the exclusion of the rest. Thus the Pharisees laid the greatest stress upon the law of circumcision, the keeping of the Sabbath, the proper width of the fringes of the mantles, the correct size of the phylacteries, etc. By giving the summary of the entire Moral Law, in all its various branches, in all its various precepts, Jesus intercepted and warded off any accusation regarding any disregard, on His part, of the sanctity of the Law. He places first of all the *Shema* of the Jews, Deut. 6, 4. The fulfilment of the entire Law flows from love of God, which, in turn, is the fruit, the outgrowth of faith. The one Lord, who has revealed Himself in three persons, is the only Lord in earth and heaven; He requires the whole, undivided service and worship of the man that trusts in Him. With heart, soul, mind, and strength every believer should love Him, that is, to the uttermost degree, with every ounce of everything that is within, throwing all into the scales for the Lord and His service. And to this must be added the second great commandment: Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. The love toward one's neighbor flows from the love toward God. He that truly loves God will also love his neighbor. Therefore love is the fulfilment of the entire Law, and all commandments can be summarized in that one word, love, Rom. 13, 10. Beyond this, higher than

this, there is no commandment; this represents the pinnacle of accomplishment in fulfilling the Law.

The Pharisee is convinced: V. 32. **And the scribe said unto Him, Well, Master, Thou hast said the truth; for there is one God; and there is none other but He;** v. 33. **and to love Him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love his neighbor as himself, is more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices.** V. 34. **And when Jesus saw that he answered discreetly, He said unto him, Thou art not far from the kingdom of God. And no man after that durst ask Him any question.** The clear-cut statement from Scriptures which Jesus gave him in answer to his tempting question made a deep impression upon the scribe. There was not a single point which could be gainsaid, there was not a single flaw, on account of which one might start an argument. It was clear, unmistakable Bible-truth. It is always thus where the Word of God is concerned. If the believer is only sure of his Bible-passages, of his proof-texts! They are the eternal truth of the great God, that will stand in spite of all jeering and all arguments to the contrary. The scribe was obliged to assent absolutely: Good, Master, in truth Thou hast said. When the Word of God has spoken, all argumentation must cease. Almost mechanically the scribe repeated the substance of Christ's instruction. But that he was fully convinced, appears from the fact that he varies Christ's words somewhat and demands love of God also with full understanding. The entire intellect and understanding, the entire ability to reason, is not shut off and put out of commission in a Christian, but rather strengthens his position over against God, since it is taken captive under the obedience of Christ. Every effort of the believing Christian is strained toward that end, of demonstrating his love toward God, of penetrating into the mysteries of God's holy Word by comparing the various sections concerning fundamental doctrines and also by showing the foolishness of the attacks upon the Bible. And if heart, soul, mind, and understanding are thus bound up in the service of God, the entire life of such a Christian will be a continual worshiping, far more valuable in the sight of God than burnt offerings and all offerings; it will be a worshiping in spirit and in truth, John 4, 24. The assent of the scribe pleased Jesus very much, since He saw that he had given the matter careful thought, that he had really understood the distinction which Jesus wished to present, that he grasped the meaning of the Lord. Joyfully He tells him: Not far art thou from the kingdom of God. The answer of the Lord had brought him to his senses. He had gained confidence in the Master of Israel and in His doctrine; he had come to the conclusion that this man must be the Messiah of Israel. The first faint movements of faith had begun in his heart. The divine Word always has the power to convince even the enemies and gainsayers.

David's Son and Lord. Mark 12, 35—40.

V. 35. **And Jesus answered and said, while He taught in the Temple, How say the scribes that Christ is the Son of David?** V. 36. **For David himself said by the Holy Ghost, The Lord said to my Lord, Sit Thou on My right hand till I make Thine enemies Thy footstool.** V. 37. **David therefore himself calleth Him Lord; and whence is He, then, his Son? And the common people heard Him gladly.** All the sects and organizations among the Jews had now had their tilt with the Lord, and in every case His word had prevailed. So thoroughly had He vanquished His enemies that no one dared to ask Him any more questions. But now His turn had come. He had a question to propose which is of prime importance, not only for the Jews, but for every person in the wide world to this day and hour: What think ye of Christ? Whose Son is He? The answer to this question has become so important that it may well be called the touchstone to determine a man's theology and faith. Jesus asks: How is it that the scribes call Christ the Son of David? With what right do they do that? The appellation "Son of David" for the expected Messiah was so common in that day that the two names were used as synonyms, Matt. 1, 1; 15, 22; 20, 30; 22, 42; 9, 27; 12, 23; 21, 9. And the scribes were right in calling the Messiah thus, for He was a true descendant of David, 2 Sam. 7, 12—16. Incidentally, however, it was also true what David said in Psalm 110, calling the Messiah his Lord. The Lord, the eternal God and Father, had, in that great everlasting to-day, said to David's Lord, to the only-begotten Son of His glory, Sit Thou on My right hand till I put Thine enemies below the footstool of Thy feet, till they are vanquished completely. Evidently the Messiah was here placed on an equality with God the Father. Now the question was how to reconcile the two statements, how to harmonize the apparent contradiction: David's Lord, yet David's Son. Note: Jesus expressly states that it was the Holy Ghost that inspired David to write these words as he did. Every believer has the answer ready and is firmly convinced of the truth of both statements: David's Son, true man, a descendant of David according to the flesh, through His mother Mary possessing the true human nature, is, at the same time, true God, the Lord over all, indued with the power of the deity from eternity, and now sitting at the right hand of the power of God, also according to His human nature. In Him, according to both natures, is our trust; through Him, and through Him alone, we hope to be saved, we have salvation. While therefore the Jewish chiefs, the religious

leaders, silently withdrew from the scene, the great multitude, among whom were also many pilgrims, heard Him gladly. And many a soul, weary with the stones of the doctrine of works, may, in these last days, have learned to believe in the Savior.

A last warning of Jesus: V. 38. **And He said unto them in His doctrine, Beware of the scribes, which love to go in long clothing, and love salutations in the marketplaces,** v. 39. **and the chief seats in the synagogs, and the uppermost room at feasts;** v. 40. **which devour widows' houses, and for a pretense make long prayers: these shall receive greater damnation.** Mark gives only a very short section of the last woe of Jesus upon the scribes and Pharisees, but a passage which exhibits very well the hollowness and the mockery of their hypocrisy. Jesus warns the people against the scribes and their hypocritical ways. They should look, they should watch out for them. And now He characterizes them properly, He shows up their sham and deceit. Their desire, their one supreme wish is to wear garments which called men's attention to them; they take a childish pleasure in bedecking themselves. Long robes they affected, like persons of great distinction, with exceptionally large tassels trailing along the ground. In these they loved to walk about, with no other object than to attract the attention of the multitude. They also loved to be greeted in the market-place; they liked the salutation Master; it gratified their vanity and their self-importance. For the same reason they chose the most prominent seats in the synagogs, those reserved for the elders of the congregation, where they would be sure to be noticed. When they were invited to dinner, they did not wait to be placed by the host, but chose the sofa of the honored guest, often usurping the place of guests more honorable than they. And to this vanity was added selfishness and greed. By promising prayers to widows, and then pompously delivering such intercessions for their welfare, they obtained money. For these prayers, purposely long and pompous, were only a blind to hide their real aim, namely, that of getting money, thus devouring the property, the houses, of the widows. This special form of avarice seems to be rampant in many parts of Christendom to this very hour, for the masses for the dead in the Roman Church certainly come under this heading, and the many prayers in the various cults are not one whit better. Christ's judgment upon them all is short and severe: They will receive the greater damnation. Their hypocrisy is open before the eyes of the Judge and will receive the punishment commensurate with its damnableness.

The Widow's Mite. Mark 12, 41—44.

V. 41. **And Jesus sat over against the treasury, and beheld how the people cast money into the treasury; and many that were rich cast in much.** V. 42. **And there came a certain poor widow, and she threw in two mites, which make a farthing.** V. 43. **And He called unto Him His disciples and saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, That this poor widow hath cast more in than all they which have cast into the treasury;** v. 44. **for all they did cast in of their abundance, but she of her want did cast in all she had, even all her living.** The Temple treasuries, thirteen in number according to transmitted accounts, were located in the Court of the Women. Jesus, being weary of His labors of teaching and arguing all day, sat down near these collection boxes, or repositories, the money of each of which was designated for special purposes, and carefully watched the multitude as they cast money into the Temple treasury. The evangelist states that many rich people, perhaps some of the merchants that came to Jerusalem only for the great festivals, threw in much. A few pieces of gold more or less made very little difference to them. It gave them the satisfied feeling of having done their duty when they dropped their superfluous money into the box. But suddenly a woman attracted the interest of the Lord. A poor widow she was, that probably had to support herself as best she could. Two mites she had in her possession, and, though she might have kept at least one of them, she threw them both into the treasury. "Another coin, translated 'mite,' is in Greek *lepton*, 'the small one,' or the 'bit.' It was two of these that the widow cast into the treasury, where it is said that two of them equaled a *quadrans*. The 'mite' was, then, of the value of ⅛ of a cent. It was doubtless the smallest coin in circulation, but it has not yet been identified with certainty with any coin that archeology has discovered." [50] There was a lesson for the disciples in this act of the poor widow, and therefore Jesus called them over quickly and pointed out the greatness of the sacrifice. In proportion, she had given more than all the rest that had cast money into the treasury. For, though many of them may have given money equal to thousands of dollars, it was all given from their surplus; these amounts they would never miss; theirs was no sacrifice in any sense. But how different the gift of the widow! She had, out of the depth of her want, in her destitute state, given all that she possessed, her whole means of living; she had sacrificed the last necessities of life to the Lord, and apparently out of a heart filled with free love for the God of Israel, since Jesus in no way censures her manner of giving. That is, in truth, cheerful giving, and such givers the Lord loveth. A special warning is in place here, since many people try to excuse their infinitesimal gifts for the Lord with a reference to the widow's mite. If cases like

50) Barton, *Archeology and the Bible*, 165.

hers would actually happen in our days, the treasuries of the Church would be filled to the bursting point, so that the disposal of the money would become a real problem. Let the Christians of the present time learn to be only one tenth as liberal and sacrificing in their gifts to the Lord as this poor widow, and there would never be need of any more cries for help.

Summary. *Christ tells the parable of the wicked husbandmen, is tempted by the Herodians and Pharisees with regard to the tribute to Caesar, answers a question of the Sadducees concerning the resurrection, names the foremost commandment of the Law, asks a question concerning David's Son and Lord, warns against the scribes, and praises the poor widow for her gift to the Temple treasury.*

CHAPTER 13.

Christ Foretells the Destruction of Jerusalem and the End of the World.

Mark 13, 1—37.

Prophecy concerning the Temple: V. 1. **And as He went out of the Temple, one of His disciples saith unto Him, Master, see what manner of stones and what buildings are here!** V. 2. **And Jesus, answering, said unto him, Seest thou these great buildings? There shall not be left one stone upon another that shall not be thrown down.** The Temple built by Herod to take the place of that erected by the Jews under Zerubbabel and restored and embellished under Judas Maccabaeus, was, so far as outward architectural beauty was concerned, a building, or rather a complex of buildings, of which any nation might have been proud. Beginning in 20—19 B. C., the sanctuary had been wrecked and rebuilt in about eighteen months, but the other halls and chambers of the Temple had been constructed much more slowly. It took forty-six years to finish all the buildings as planned by Herod, John 2, 20, but the last stones of the enclosures with their beautiful sculptured work were not put into place until the year 64 A. D. The disciples thus had good reasons for pointing out to Jesus some of the immense stones, fifty feet long, twenty-four broad, and sixteen in thickness, of which Josephus writes, and they could well admire the immense porticoes, with their slender Corinthian columns and the great central buildings, rising almost 180 feet over the Court of the Gentiles, its marble coping and golden ornaments making it by far the most conspicuous edifice in the entire city. Jesus freely admits that the great size and the magnificence of the Temple are unquestioned, but He also knows, according to His prophetic wisdom, what terrible destruction and devastation would be worked here less than four decades hence, that God's wrath would be poured out upon the city and the Temple in full measure. He knows that the unbelief and the rejection of the Messiah, of His own labor and ministry, would bring upon the Temple such a fate as would vainly seek for a comparison in the history of the world. As for the Temple, not one stone would be left in place upon the other which would not be removed and thoroughly destroyed. This was the beginning of a conversation between Christ and His disciples which was continued on their way over the Mount of Olives, where they stopped for a while, and was probably not ended till they reached Bethany for the night's lodging.

The first signs preceding the end: V. 3. **And as He sat upon the Mount of Olives over against the Temple, Peter and James and John and Andrew asked Him privately,** v. 4. **Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign when all these things shall be fulfilled?** V. 5. **And Jesus, answering them, began to say, Take heed lest any man deceive you;** v. 6. **for many shall come in My name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many.** V. 7. **And when ye shall hear of wars and rumors of wars, be ye not troubled; for such things must needs be; but the end shall not be yet.** V. 8. **For nation shall rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom; and there shall be earthquakes in divers places, and there shall be famines and troubles. These are the beginnings of sorrows.** Mark's description is graphic, vivid: Jesus with His disciples goes over to the mountain and then sits down opposite the Temple, with the great buildings in full view; an impressive setting for an earnest discussion. Throughout the chapter, note: Before the eye of the omniscient Son of God, when He speaks in a prophetic vein, the factor of time does not exist; unless He Himself makes the distinction, all the happenings are in His mind's eye at this instant; He sees them all together, whether they are connected with the destruction of the city of Jerusalem or with the end of the world; then, also, the judgment of God upon Jerusalem was the type and the beginning of the last great judgment. The final destruction of the world steeped in sins was begun in Judea, and its end, with the extension of God's avenging fury over the whole world, may be expected at any moment, we know not when.

The statement of Jesus concerning the absolute destruction of the Temple had made a deep impression upon all disciples. And therefore His three most intimate friends, together with Andrew, the brother of Peter, venture to ask Him about this judgment of God. They combine, in their inquiry, the end of Jerusalem

and the Temple and the last day of the world, when all these things will be fully executed. In giving them His answer, Jesus makes no sharp distinction between the two events, but speaks of them in such a way that the signs presaging the one may also be taken as foretelling the other. They should beware of deceivers that would falsely claim Messianic power and authority. As in those days these prophets misled the people, Acts 21, 38; 8, 9. 10, so men and women usurping the Christian name and authority of Christ are appearing in increasing numbers in our days. And they are deceiving many; the Athenians have been surpassed in gullibility and credulousness. As in those days people arose against people and kingdom against kingdom, the Jews and Galileans against the Samaritans, the Jews against the Romans and Agrippa, civil war in Italy, so the wars and rumors of wars of our days have reached a magnitude hitherto unheard of in the history of the world. These things will come; it is inevitable, so long as human nature remains sinful, that they do come; and they come also as a just punishment of God. As in those days there were earthquakes in various places, at Crete, in several cities of Asia Minor, on some of the islands of the Aegean, in Rome and the surrounding country, so the earthquakes of the last two decades, in California, in Alaska, in Java, in Italy, and many other countries and states are preaching a forcible sermon. As there were famines and internal strife in those days, in the days of Claudius Caesar, Acts 21, 28, so at the present time a gigantic famine is threatening a large part of Europe and Asia, hundreds of thousands have perished, and this is but the beginning; and as for seditions, never has social unrest been so apparent throughout the nations as at the present time. The Lord is speaking with a powerful voice, asking the nations to heed His prophecies.

Persecution of the believers: V. 9. **But take heed to yourselves; for they shall deliver you up to councils; and in the synagogs ye shall be beaten; and ye shall be brought before rulers and kings for My sake, for a testimony against them.** V. 10. **And the Gospel must first be published among all nations.** V. 11. **But when they shall lead you and deliver you up, take no thought beforehand what ye shall speak, neither do ye premeditate; but whatsoever shall be given you in that hour, that speak ye; for it is not ye that speak, but the Holy Ghost.** Incessant watchfulness, untiring vigilance, the Lord enjoins upon His disciples. For the Jews and their leaders would not passively permit the extension of the Christian influence, the spread of the Christian religion. All their various courts would be called upon to hinder the work of the apostles and their assistants. Christ bluntly tells them: You, delivered to the synagogs, shall be maltreated. And for His sake they would have to stand before rulers and kings. All this will be a testimony not to them, but against them. It will be marked down in the judgment-book of God as another item calling down His punishment upon the enemies of His Word. As we read throughout the Acts of the Apostles, and in individual accounts given by St. Paul in his letters, these prophecies were literally fulfilled. And there is little difference between those days and ours, only that at the present time expediency and political measures are urged by the enemies of the pure Gospel in persecuting the believers throughout the world. But, in the midst of it all, Christ's prophecy shines like a beacon light: And to all nations the Gospel must first be preached. In those days the apostles filled the known world with the glorious news of the salvation gained by Jesus for all men, and in our days there are always some to be found that go out in utter selflessness to bring the news of the reconciliation of God with men through the blood of Christ to every nation. With this promise to guide them, to cheer them, to fill them with new courage every day, the prospect of suffering injustice before the powers that be holds no terror for the believers. Christ tells them not to worry beforehand how they might duly defend themselves against the false accusations. At the critical moment He promises to give them the right words which they may use in defending themselves. The Holy Ghost would directly inspire their utterances, so that their defense would be, in each instance, a powerful vindication of the truth of the Gospel and of the power of God. And the history of the Church since the time of the apostles narrates instances in number which show that God, in times of great crises, awakens men with extraordinary abilities and powers to defend the Scriptures against false accusations and to vindicate Christianity. Though we do not yield to a false enthusiasm in their case, as, for instance, in that of Luther, and are far from claiming direct inspiration for them, yet we know that in their preaching, also in defense of the truth of the eternal Gospel, it was God and His Spirit that was with them.

Dissension within families: V. 12. **Now the brother shall betray the brother to death and the father the son; and children shall rise up against their parents, and shall cause them to be put to death.** V. 13. **And ye shall be hated of all men for My name's sake. But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.** There is no hatred so unrelenting and implacable as that caused by enmity against Christ. It destroys the firmest friendships, it severs the ties of the closest blood-relationship. Brothers, fathers, children will not only stand by unmoved and see their nearest of kin suffer for the sake of their religious, Christian conviction, but they will become inhuman enough to cause these sufferings, to deliver them into the hands of the authorities and cause them to be put to death.

History has scores of examples, from the time of the apostles down through the time of the Inquisition, to the present day. It is an ineradicable characteristic of the world and its children that they hate the truth of the Gospel, even at such times when they speak of toleration and of the value of the Christian spirit for the community. But mark two factors that make such persecutions not only endurable, but under circumstances welcome: They come upon the believers for the sake of the Lord's name, and it is an honor to suffer for Him, on His account; they have a glorious promise: He that endures, patiently suffers, to the end, the same shall be saved. A reward of mercy will come upon him from the boundless treasure of his Lord, salvation will be given him with endless rejoicing in heaven.

The visitation upon the Jews: V. 14. **But when ye shall see the abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel the prophet standing where it ought not, (let him that readeth understand,) then let them that be in Judea flee to the mountains;** v. 15. **and let him that is on the housetop not go down into the house, neither enter therein to take anything out of his house;** v. 16. **and let him that is in the field not turn back again for to take up his garment.** The Lord here mentions some of the signs that would presage especially the destruction of the Temple and of the city. It makes little difference, so far as the actual point and object of the admonition is concerned, whether we understand by the abomination of desolation the desecration of the Temple by the Emperor Caligula or the armies of the Romans with their ensigns and idols, as they came marching into the country and approached the city of Jerusalem. At any rate, the presence of the armies in the neighborhood of the city, Luke 21, 20, should be considered the final period for remaining in Judea. Jesus warningly interpolates the call: Whoever reads it let him understand! It is important that the disciples heed His warning. All those that were still in the country should then flee, without delay, into the mountains. This the small band of Christians remaining in Jerusalem before the destruction did, finding refuge in the mountain town of Pella. If one should receive the news of the invasion and its abomination while on the flat roof of his house, he should take no time to enter into the house again, but should flee down the outside steps leading to the open. One at work in the field should not turn back for his mantle. Every minute's delay will increase the danger and the nearness of the calamity.

The horrors of the devastation: V. 17. **But woe to them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days!** V. 18. **And pray ye that your flight be not in the winter.** V. 19. **For in those days shall be affliction, such as was not from the beginning of the creation which God created unto this time, neither shall be.** V. 20. **And except that the Lord had shortened those days, no flesh should be saved; but for the elect's sake, whom He hath chosen, He hath shortened the days.** The prophecy of Christ here becomes so vivid that the apostles had the whole picture before their mind's eye: the precipitate flight, the fear and terror, the greatest hardships falling upon those that are by nature least able to bear them. The condition of those that had but recently become or were about to become mothers would be most pitiful, since they would be severely handicapped for hurried departure. And so far as they all were concerned, they should implore God most earnestly that their flight should not take place in the winter, when the season's unpleasantness would be an added inconvenience. Jesus uses a very strong figure at this point: The days will be tribulation. The people would be so completely submerged and overwhelmed with the horror of it all that they would be able to see nothing but these fears and fightings; there would be such nameless misfortunes and trials that all calamitous experiences of the entire human race would thereby be eclipsed. The siege and destruction of Jerusalem was the bloodiest spectacle which the world has ever seen, and the actual affliction of those days has not been equaled since. If it had not been for the merciful shortening of those days out of regard for them that were God's own, none would be saved. Note: Both the creation and the work of redemption are here ascribed to God by Jesus; He has created the whole creation, and He loves, and will care for, His believers, He will hear their intercession for others out of loving kindness.

The false Christs: V. 21. **And then if any man shall say to you, Lo, here is Christ; or, Lo, He is there; believe him not;** v. 22. **for false Christs and false prophets shall rise, and shall show signs and wonders, to seduce, if it were possible, even the elect.** V. 23. **But take ye heed: behold, I have foretold you all things.** A second warning against the insidiousness and impertinence of the false teachers. They came in those days, in increasing numbers, political Messiahs that promised deliverance from the yoke of the Romans. Their apparent sincerity, the power of their oratory, the mere influence of their personality induced many a person foolishly to cast his lot with them and be carried along with them to his destruction. And they are coming in our days, without the Church and within the Church, political Messiahs, social reformers, millennial dreamers that place the kingdom of Christ here upon earth, that glibly prate of the emancipation of the masses and of a final glorious state where all men will be equal and all men will be happy. They even do signs and wonders, both false and apparently real, by the help of Satan. The object always is to seduce, if possible, the believers, God's

own elect. But there will be a deliverance at the last hour. Therefore the believers will, in the mean time, be on their guard. Christ has come, He has left us His infallible Word; we need no further word, or revelation, no key, no new light; all these are signs of the false Christs. The Word is nigh unto us, the Word of the Gospel; that will save our souls, all other words and books of new sects are dangerous, deceiving, destroying. Christ's warning was given in advance on their account.

The coming of Judgment Day: V. 24. **But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light,** v. 25. **and the stars of heaven shall fall, and the powers that are in heaven shall be shaken.** V. 26. **And then shall they see the Son of Man coming in the clouds with great power and glory.** V. 27. **And then shall He send His angels, and shall gather together His elect from the four winds, from the uttermost part of the earth to the uttermost part of heaven.** The evangelist's account is only a brief summary of the words of the Lord, but what depth of emotion is in the few words thus recorded! As Jesus looks forward, according to His omniscience, the earlier calamity will merge into the later, the judgment upon Jerusalem is carried out only on a greater scale in the final judgment of the world. There will be no interval of a happy, sinless reign, no millennium. With no respite and without extensive previous warning the Day of the Lord will dawn, it will burst upon the world with great suddenness. Then there will be signs such as are entirely out of the usual course of events in nature; no ordinary eclipses which follow laws and rules framed by God, but a return to chaos. The sun will be darkened; the moon will lose her splendor; the stars will no longer be able to hold the position which was given them by the Creator, but will fall from heaven. There will be a great concussion of the powers of the heavens. The entire universe will go out of joint. The hand of God's providence and government will be withdrawn, and all will be dissolved into its component parts. And then, when the world is falling to pieces and the heavens are being rolled up like a curtain, then they, the people of the earth, will see the Son of Man, the divine-human Savior of mankind, that came into the world for them all, but was received by so few, coming in the clouds. Like a mighty conqueror riding in his chariot of triumph, the former despised Nazarene will appear, with great power and glory. According to His human nature, He has now assumed the full divine glory and majesty, and now returns as the Judge of the living and the dead. In the fulness of this majesty He will command His angels to go forth and to bring together to Him the elect, from the four winds, from every part of the earth, as far as the world extends, wherever human beings have penetrated. Not the slightest shred of the former lowliness and weakness is evident in this glorious picture, it is the great, the almighty Lord of the universe that is here holding the great harvest of the last day.

The parable of the fig-tree: V. 28. **Now learn a parable of the fig-tree; When her branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is near;** v. 29. **so ye in like manner, when ye shall see these things come to pass, know that it is nigh, even at the doors.** V. 30. **Verily I say unto you that this generation shall not pass till all these things be done.** V. 31. **Heaven and earth shall pass away; but My words shall not pass away.** In the matter of the proper state of preparedness against the coming of the Lord the fig-tree is used to teach a lesson. When its branch becomes soft and full of sap, and when its leaves come forth, then men have a sure indication that the entire tree has been influenced by the growing warmth; they know that summer-time is near. And the same degree of watching and drawing conclusions is necessary where the disciples of Christ of all times are concerned. The signs, general and special, which the Lord gave the apostles of the near approach of Jerusalem's doom, ought always to be in their memory, and they ought to heed their first warning. Even so the signs, general and particular, that herald the coming of the last day, are clearly given in the Word of God by Christ Himself. There will be no excuse for not knowing about the coming of the Judgment and preparing for its advent. And the Lord adds another sign: Verily I say to you that this generation will not pass away till all this come to pass. He meant to say, either that some of the people living at the time of this prophecy would be witnesses of the great judgment which would come upon Jerusalem; or, what is more likely, He referred to the race of the Jews. This people, the nation that had rejected Him, should not cease to be a distinct race of people, separate from all the rest, until Christ's coming in glory would take place. They should remain as a standing testimony and proof of the truthfulness of Christ's words. For, as He says with great emphasis, heaven and earth shall pass away, their physical contents and elements will be destroyed in the fire of that last day, but His words shall not pass away. Amidst the ruin of worlds and the destruction of the heavens His eternal Word will stand unchanged as He Himself, for it belongs to His essence, it is eternal.

The time of the last day: V. 32. **But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father.** V. 33. **Take ye heed, watch and pray; for ye know not when the time is.** V. 34. **For the Son of Man is as a man taking a far journey, who left his house, and gave authority to his**

servants, and to every man his work, and commanded the porter to watch. V. 35. **Watch ye therefore; for ye know not when the Master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cock-crowing, or in the morning,** v. 36. **lest, coming suddenly, He find you sleeping.** V. 37. **And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch.** With so much information given them, the disciples might have thought that they ought to know the exact date of Christ's second advent, for that would greatly simplify matters. But Christ rejects the idea before it has been voiced. Of the day when the final judgment will burst upon the world and of the hour of the day when its first indications will come to pass, no person knows; even the angels are ignorant, though they know many of the secrets and mysteries of God. And what is more, the day is not known to Jesus in His state of humiliation. The Son of God, in His capacity as Savior of men and specifically according to His human nature, has renounced His right to this knowledge, chiefly for the sake of men, lest they be tempted to make inquiries and bother Him with importunate pleadings concerning the day and the hour. Here is a secret which is hidden in the omniscience of the Father. But that fact brings out Christ's admonition all the more strongly: Be on the lookout, be vigilant, for the exact time is not known upon earth. All the calculations of the various sects as to the exact date of Christ's coming are utterly unreliable vagaries, and those that follow them are just as foolish. This is brought out in another parable. When the master of a household who has business in a distant part of the country or in a far country is called away he will leave his house in charge of his servants, distributing the work according to the ability of each and giving to every one some authority and responsibility, each one thus being put on his honor. The porter will be singled out for a special warning, lest he be asleep at his post. Thus Jesus, the Lord of His Church, has given to each one of His believers, His servants, some work to do, some ability, some gifts, with which the individual Christian is to serve Him in His kingdom. The Lord will return some time, soon, almost any minute, and therefore it is necessary for every one of the servants to be about his business with careful vigilance. The Master may come in any of the four watches of the night, and His coming must find no one sleeping in security. The picture reminds us of the custom of watching in the Temple. This was in the hands of a certain number of priests and Levites, whose business was a sleepless vigilance. At any time during the night, no one knew in which watch, the chief of the Temple-service might make his rounds. And woe to him that was caught asleep at that time! Much more important, however, is the necessity which is laid upon all the disciples of Christ not to become drowsy, listless, and negligent in the Master's work or in constant watching for His coming. Let every Christian write upon the portals of his heart that one word: Watch! It is very true, indeed, that the unbelievers think it a huge joke to ridicule the belief of the Christians about the coming of Judgment Day: Where is the promise of His coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation, 2 Pet. 3, 3—7. At the same time, however, those very scoffers are the first ones, during a storm or at the time of an earthquake, or in the presence of some other extraordinary manifestation of God in nature, to fall upon their knees and implore God's mercy. It is absolutely safe to stand on God's Word and to heed His warning at all times: Watch!

Summary. *Answering several questions of His disciples, Jesus foretells the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple, predicts the devastation of the Jewish country, mentioning a number of signs that would precede such judgment of God, also prophesies of the end of the world and tells several short parables to impress upon every one the necessity to watch.*

CHAPTER 14.

The Anointing of Jesus. Mark 14, 1—9.

The council of the chief priests and scribes: V. 1. **After two days was the Feast of the Passover and of Unleavened Bread; and the chief priests and the scribes sought how they might take Him by craft and put Him to death.** V. 2. **But they said, Not on the feast-day, lest there be an uproar of the people.** The Jewish authorities had not given up one bit of their enmity and rage against the Prophet of Galilee. There had been daily sessions in the Hall of Polished Stones and undoubtedly many private consultations of the manner in which the unpleasant interloper might be removed. It was now Wednesday. Mark gives the full name of the festival which was approaching: the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread. The Passover was celebrated on the 14th of Abib, or Nisan, the spring month, and it merged into the Feast of Unleavened Bread. The two festivals were really celebrated as one, and their names were used promiscuously. The members of the Sanhedrin felt that matters had now reached such a stage that quick action was demanded, John 11, 48. They were anxious to take Him, and yet they felt that it must be done with craft. Die He must, of that they were certain, but wisdom told them not to have the arrest take place on the festival day. Should they attempt that,

there was almost sure to be a popular disturbance and demonstration in His favor. That must be avoided at all costs; before or after the festival was the proper time. The poor blind Pharisees did not know that the entire matter was in God's hands, and that the day and the hour of Christ's death had been decided in God's council.

The anointing at Bethany: V. 3. **And being in Bethany in the house of Simon the leper as He sat at meat, there came a woman having an alabaster box of ointment of spikenard very precious; and she brake the box, and poured it on His head.** V. 4. **And there were some that had indignation within themselves and said, Why was this waste of the ointment made?** V. 5. **For it might have been sold for more than three hundred pence and have been given to the poor. And they murmured against her.** Mark here inserts a story of the Saturday before, when Jesus first came to Bethany from Jericho, unless we want to assume that two anointings took place. This Simon the leper seems to have been a relative of Lazarus, whom Jesus raised from the dead. He had been cured of his terrible disease by the Lord and was duly thankful for the gift thus received, in his own way. Jesus had accepted an invitation to dinner with him and was reclining among the guests, when the incidents here narrated took place. A woman came into the room bearing an alabaster vase with genuine and very precious ointment, an Indian perfume made from the stems of a plant growing in the southern Himalayas, known as nard, or spikenard. The woman's actions drew the attention of the entire table company to her. Going over to Jesus, she broke off the narrow neck of the vase, in order that the perfumed ointment might flow out all the more easily and then poured it out upon His head. It was an act of simple, unconscious devotion, of tender love. But it was not viewed with favor by all the table-round. There were certain ones present, and among them not a few of the disciples, with Judas Iscariot leading, that began to feel indignation rising in themselves: Why has this waste of the ointment been made? And not satisfied with mere grumbling, Judas finds the courage to give some reason for his objection: This myrrh might have been sold for more than three hundred denarii (fifty dollars) and the money given to the poor. In this way he snarled directly at the woman, and the others seconded him. It was a passionate outburst altogether out of proportion to the guilt of the woman, even if she had been tactless or extravagant. But the thought of Judas grew out of a heart that had long since ceased to be single in Christ's service. His heart belonged to the devil of avarice; and the poor interested him not at all.

Jesus defends the woman: V. 6. **And Jesus said, Let her alone; why trouble ye her? She hath wrought a good work on Me.** V. 7. **For ye have the poor with you always, and whensoever ye will, ye may do them good; but Me ye have not always.** V. 8. **She hath done what she could; she is come aforehand to anoint My body to the burying.** V. 9. **Verily I say unto you, Wheresoever this Gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, this also that she hath done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her.** With all this denunciation being heaped upon her, the woman stood patiently waiting to hear the verdict of Christ. And she was not disappointed in her trust. In a shorter manner than usual, Jesus takes her part and defends her against the senseless attacks of the prosaic disciples and of the greedy Judas: Let her alone; why do you serve her with molestations? Their unwarranted interference in a matter which, after all, concerned Him and the woman only was extremely distasteful to Him. He wants them to stop nagging her. And not only that: A good work has she performed toward Me. He is pleased with the attention He has received at her hands. Always they had the poor with them, and if they were so anxious to do them good, there would be plenty of opportunities. He does not want to discourage true neighborly love and altruism; He rather implies that the willing-minded will find enough outlet for all benevolent feelings. But in the present instance it was to be remembered that the Lord would not always stay with His disciples and the others in the old familiar, visible intercourse. The woman has thought of that possibility and done what she could to show her devotion while the Savior was yet with them. And, at the same time, she has anticipated the preparations for His burial by pouring this ointment upon His head. His death and burial would take place very soon, and she was not any too soon with her deed of kindness. And Jesus adds a very impressive word, saying that this simple deed would be thought of and spoken of in the entire world, wherever the news of Him, the Gospel, would be proclaimed. Note: Jesus predicts that the Gospel as such, as the news of Him and of His labors for mankind, will be preached, a promise which is extremely comforting to us in the midst of the attacks that are made on the transmitted gospels; and He states that the Gospel will be preached in the whole world, that the glorious news of man's redemption through the blood of the Savior would not be withheld from any one. This double truth was the best, the most cheering comfort which He could have given the woman.

The Preparation for, and the Celebration of, the Passover. Mark 14, 10—25.

Judas offers to betray Jesus: V. 10. **And Judas Iscariot, one of the Twelve, went unto the chief priests to betray Him unto**

them. V. 11. And when they heard it, they were glad, and promised to give him money. And he sought how he might conveniently betray Him. The public reprimand which Judas had received in the house of Simon in Bethany, when he voiced his displeasure over the woman's deed of kindness, seems to have been the direct motive for his betrayal. His downward road was similar to that of many that do not cling to the Savior with all simplicity of heart. The fact that he was treasurer of the disciples taught him to crave money and nourished his pride. Soon he loved money, he worshiped gold, he was most anxious to possess all that he could. Ordinary, honest methods of obtaining it did not appeal to him any more, they were too slow; so he became a thief. And now Christ's defense of the woman had roused his anger. One of the Twelve he had been chosen, one of the Twelve he still was, in appearance, but he now went to the chief priests in order to betray his Lord and Master to them. And they? On this matter, where it concerned the murder of an innocent person, they were only too glad to give him audience; they were filled with hellish glee as they contemplated the destruction of the hated Nazarene. They gave him the assurance that they would give him silver, that they would pay him well for his nefarious deed. And Judas, hardened against all the warnings of his conscience, against all appeals of his better nature, from that hour deliberately sought opportunity, how he might betray Jesus at a most convenient time. Judas is a terrible example of the power of Satan over the heart that deliberately leaves and rejects the Lord.

The preparation for the Passover: V. 12. **And the first day of unleavened bread, when they killed the passover, His disciples said unto Him, Where wilt Thou that we go and prepare that Thou mayest eat the passover? V. 13. And He sendeth forth two of His disciples and saith unto them, Go ye into the city, and there shall meet you a man bearing a pitcher of water; follow him. V. 14. And wheresoever he shall go in, say ye to the goodman of the house, The Master saith, Where is the guest-chamber, where I shall eat the passover with My disciples? V. 15. And he will show you a large upper room furnished and prepared; there make ready for us. V. 16. And His disciples went forth, and came into the city, and found as He had said unto them; and they made ready the passover.** It was on the day from Wednesday evening to Thursday evening, the day when the Jews carefully swept out all leaven and leavened bread out of their houses, and which they therefore reckoned with the days of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, in the wider sense, that the disciples of Jesus came to Him with the question whether they would celebrate the festival as usual. Jesus, as a member of the Jewish Church, observed all the outward forms of the Jewish cultus. It was necessary to know this at this time, since on this day the passover lamb was sacrificed at the Temple. So they wanted to know where He would have them go and make everything ready for the eating of the passover lamb. Jesus complied with their request by selecting two of the disciples and giving them very explicit directions. They should go to the city, where they would meet a man carrying a vessel with water. Him they should follow, and at the house where he would enter they should ask the master of the house for the location of the dining-room where Jesus might eat the passover with His disciples. These directions of Jesus the two apostles followed, for they had thereby become His representatives and were acting in the name of the head of the company, which, according to Josephus, numbered between ten and twenty. They went to Jerusalem, purchased a lamb that met the requirements of the law, and took this up to the Temple one hour after the evening sacrifice, when all the priests were busy with the passover sacrifices. One of them killed the lamb himself, its blood being caught by one of the officiating priests to be poured out at the foot of the altar. They then took the lamb to the house which had been designated by Jesus and made arrangements to have it roasted and all the other dishes of the passover meal prepared. The dining-room they found in an upper story of the house, with the necessary sofas all ready. Thus all preparations for the paschal meal were completed. With sunset the Feast of Passover began; it was the 14th of Nisan.

The paschal meal: V. 17. **And in the evening He cometh with the Twelve. V. 18. And as they sat and did eat, Jesus said, Verily I say unto you, One of you which eateth with Me shall betray Me. V. 19. And they began to be sorrowful, and to say unto Him one by one, Is it I? and another said, Is it I? V. 20. And He answered and said unto them, It is one of the Twelve that dippeth with Me in the dish. V. 21. The Son of Man indeed goeth as it is written of Him; but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! Good were it for that man if he had never been born.** In the evening, after the festival had actually begun, after sundown, Jesus came to the city with the remaining apostles, thus making the number of men in His company, Himself not included, twelve. Judas was brazen enough to keep up appearances to the last; he went with the rest as though nothing were wrong. And so the meal was begun and took its usual course. Cp. Matt. 26, 20—26. It was during the feast proper, after the singing of the first part of the Hallel, when they had received the bread and were partaking of the roasted lamb, that the Lord said, with deep emotion:

Verily I say unto you that one of you will betray Me, one that is eating with Me; a reference to Ps. 41, 9. This announcement caused the greatest consternation and sorrow in the circle of the disciples. The manner of Christ's announcement had emphasized the gravity of the offense. **And so they all, one after the other, put the worried or reproachful question: Surely it cannot be I?** Even Judas, the traitor and hypocrite, coolly adds his voice to the general uproar. But Jesus did not give them the satisfaction of hearing the name of the traitor. His loving Shepherd's heart was even then yearning for the poor, blinded sheep that had gone astray. It should not be for want of tender solicitude that Judas continued in his transgression. Christ merely declares that it is one of the Twelve, one of those chosen to be apostles of faith, and more exactly, one of those that dipped his bread into the same dish with Him. It was a dish of gravylike soup, called *charoseth*, made of raisins, dates, vinegar, and several other ingredients, to which He referred. At just about this time, Jesus, as the head of the little company, dipped a morsel of bread into the dish, and the tremulous hand of Judas was extended, with feigned ease, to receive the sop from Him. But in the excitement, this significant fact was not generally noticed. While Judas reached out his hand, was, in fact, dipping His own hand with that of Jesus into the sauce, Jesus very solemnly declares that the Son of Man, the divine-human Redeemer, would indeed go on with the work, on the path of His Passion, according to Scriptures. But woe to that particular man through whom His betrayal would be brought about; it would have been the best thing for that particular man if he had never been born. To any one not thoroughly hardened in sin, these words of Christ must have held a powerful appeal. But Judas did not heed the warning; he acted, or tried to act as though nothing unusual were occurring about him, as though the air were not charged to its utmost capacity with suspended force. His responsibility and guilt at this moment should have been brought home to him with full force; he should have considered the results, the curse of God upon the deliberate transgression, the inevitable punishment, but he saw only the bag of money that was to be his if he was successful in his dastardly undertaking. He was, by his own fault, in the power of Satan.

The institution of the Lord's Supper: V. 22. **And as they did eat, Jesus took bread, and blessed, and brake it, and gave to them, and said, Take, eat; this is My body.** V. 23. **And He took the cup, and when He had given thanks, He gave it to them; and they all drank of it.** V. 24. **And He said unto them, This is My blood of the new testament, which is shed for many.** V. 25. **Verily I say unto you, I will drink no more of the fruit of the vine until that day that I drink it new in the kingdom of God.** The meal had practically come to a conclusion, with Christ and the disciples still reclining about the table, when the Lord did a remarkable thing. He took bread, either one of the two paschal loaves or a piece that had remained after the meal. Having spoken a blessing over it, He broke it and passed it around to them, probably by going from one to the other, each one receiving a piece. To the several disciples He may have changed the address a trifle, but the substance was always the same: Take and eat; this is My body. This was not a mere symbolical act, for there was not the remotest resemblance between the fragments of bread and the body of a full-grown man. And here it makes no difference whether Jesus spoke Greek or Aramaic on that evening: He stated that the bread which He gave to them is His body. Then He took the cup which they had used during the meal, the third cup being known as the cup of blessing. Having given thanks to God over it, He gave it to them, passing from one to the other. And again He made a very clear statement regarding the contents of that cup: This is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many. It is the New Testament which was herewith ushered in; the covenant which God makes with the world in and with Christ and His blood and through its shedding has brought salvation to all men, even though only a part of mankind will accept the offering of their redemption through the blood of Jesus. If we believe the words of Christ just as they were here spoken, taking our reason captive under the obedience of Scriptures, we shall always receive the full benefit of this Sacrament. We shall always take from it the assurance of the forgiveness of all our sins. We shall always be strengthened anew in our faith. As the celebration of the first Passover strengthened the Israelites for their long journey through the wilderness, so the Lord's Supper is for the believers of the New Testament food on the way during their earthly pilgrimage. And incidentally, like the paschal meal, it points forward to the end of the journey, to the heavenly banquet, where the Lord will drink with us of the cup of salvation in all eternity. To this the Lord refers when He says that He will henceforth not drink with them of the fruit of the vine. For this expression was the term by which the paschal wine was designated among the Jews, the term which they used in the blessing of, and in the thanksgiving over, the wine. To argue that the Lord had used anything but true, fermented wine in the institution of the Eucharist, is to overthrow all historical and exegetical reasoning. Cp. Matt. 26, 29. The Lord here instituted the second Sacrament of the New Testament. "As in Baptism He loosed from the Old Testament circumcision the sacred washing which accompanied it, and made it the New Testament Sacrament of the covenant entered into, so also

now He severed the breaking of the bread and the cup of thanksgiving from the Old Testament Passover, and made it a sacrament of the New Testament redemption." 51)

The Passion in Gethsemane.

Mark 14, 26—42.

The walk to Gethsemane: V. 26. **And when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the Mount of Olives.** V. 27. **And Jesus saith unto them, All ye shall be offended because of Me this night; for it is written, I will smite the Shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered.** V. 28. **But after that I am risen, I will go before you into Galilee.** V. 29. **But Peter said unto Him, Although all shall be offended, yet will not I.** V. 30. **And Jesus saith unto him, Verily I say unto thee, That this day, even in this night, before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny Me thrice.** V. 31. **But he spake the more vehemently, If I should die with Thee, I will not deny Thee in any wise. Likewise also said they all.** Jesus had duly finished His last paschal meal; He had incidentally given to His disciples and to all the believers of the New Testament the wonderful blessing of the Eucharist. They now, all together, sang the last part of the Hallel, and then left the upper room and the house of the celebration and slowly wended their way across the Brook Kidron and over to a little garden or orchard on the western slope of Mount Olivet, called Gethsemane, which means "olive-press." It was probably an olive orchard overlooking the valley and the Temple mount. While on their way over there, Jesus suddenly says to His disciples (note the vivid narration of Mark): All of you will stumble, will be offended, this night. "The discipleship was about to experience a moral breakdown." In making this startling announcement, Jesus referred them to a prophecy, Zech. 13, 7. God had foretold that He would afflict, smite the Shepherd, and as a result the sheep would be dispersed, scattered. The suffering of Christ was God's doing, His affliction; it was demanded by His holiness and righteousness: the Substitute of mankind must suffer the stripes for all mankind. At the same time, Jesus adds a cheering prediction. They would not lose their Shepherd, their Master, for all time, since He would rise from the dead and would go before them into Galilee. Note the promise: Their offense would thus not last; His sufferings would terminate in death, but death would not be able to hold Him, He would throw off its fetters and arise from the grave; He would resume the old relation toward them. But Peter, the impetuous and untried, felt his honor assailed in the first announcement of the Lord. Quickly he turns to Jesus with a protest: Even if all should be offended, most certainly not I. Note the presumption: The others may be weak enough, of them perhaps no more can be expected, but it is altogether different with me. Peter was suffering with too much self-confidence, with too much trust in his own abilities and powers. He should have begged the Lord most humbly to come to his assistance in case the temptation would become too severe for his weakness. Peter's case is that of many Christians whom the Lord has given some special grace, and who then become obsessed with the idea that they really amount to something in the kingdom of God, that without them the Church would suffer a great loss. As a matter of fact, no person is irreplaceable in the work of the kingdom of Christ, and unless every worker makes use of the greatest humility at all times, he may find the experience of Peter repeated in himself, 1 Cor. 10, 12.

Jesus takes the opportunity to give Peter a very emphatic, energetic warning in the form of a prophecy. Solemnly He declares: Verily I say to *thee* that *thou*, with all thy boasting, to-day, in this very night (exact indication of time), before the second cock-crowing (a still more precise fixing of the time), shalt thrice deny Me. Mark gives the most exact account of the denial and all that preceded it, undoubtedly at the instigation of Peter, who always felt the depth of his fall on the night before his Lord's death. Instead of shaking Peter out of his sleepy security, the solemn declaration of Jesus only aroused his zeal the more. He began to say and kept on saying, "abundantly in manner and matter, with vehemence and iteration." He used increasing force in expressing what he thought was the honest conviction of his heart; even if he should have to go into death with the Lord, he would not deny Him. And his self-confident words were echoed in the protestations of the others, who, however, made the assertion only once, and without his fire.

The beginning of the agony: V. 32. **And they came to a place which was called Gethsemane; and He saith to His disciples, Sit ye here while I shall pray.** V. 33. **And He taketh with Him Peter and James and John, and began to be sore amazed and to be very heavy;** v. 34. **and saith unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful unto death. Tarry ye here and watch.** During the discussion which followed the prediction of Christ they had reached the goal of their journey, Gethsemane. At the entrance Jesus turned to the greater number of the apostles, eight of them, since Judas had left, and bade them sit down while He prayed. As in many other trying situations, He wanted to lay the matter which was oppressing Him into the hands of His heavenly Father. No matter how great the cross and the affliction, the Christian is always safest if He places it in the hands of God, for then the strength for bearing

51) Schaff, *Commentary, Matthew*, 469.

it will be forthcoming, 1 Cor. 10, 13. Only His three intimate disciples, Peter, James, and John, He took with Him into the garden. And now began the agony of Christ. Note: He had known during all the years of His ministry what He would have to endure at its end, in the great Passion. He had repeatedly talked to His disciples about it. But now that the hour was upon Him, now that He realized with vivid intensity what it meant to be burdened with the load of the whole world's sin and guilt, it rose before His dazed senses as an appalling revelation. He was amazed, horrified, He was oppressed with a dismal fear. Excessively sorrowful, with a sorrow which no human tongue could express, was His soul, even unto death. The load which had been placed upon Him, the guilt which was searing His soul, threatened Him with death, brought Him face to face with the king of terrors. He, as the greatest of all sinners, felt the curse of death upon the sins He was bearing a millionfold. The anguish caused Him to cling to the three disciples with the pitiful appeal: Remain here and watch! "Such anguish Christ, our dear Lord, wanted to suffer for the honor of His heavenly Father and for the benefit of us men, in order that we might henceforth have a Lord over such anguish, when our face becomes pointed and thin, when our eyes grow dark and sightless, our tongue cannot speak, and our head cannot think: that we then cling to this Man who has conquered this terror and drowned it in Himself. Therefore our anguish also cannot be so great as it was in His heart, for Christ conquered the greatest anguish in His innocent heart, and in His clean, pure blood He has extinguished and overcome the bitter rage and the poisonous, fiery darts of the devil, in order that we might comfort ourselves with His victory. The devil surely shot his fiery darts into Him and pressed them into His heart, saying: Thou art no longer in God's grace, etc. And these darts He has extinguished in His innocent heart, in His delicate body, and in His pure blood, and has let them enter so deeply that they have become dull and no longer have any power over us. This the suffering of other saints cannot accomplish, ... but that of Christ only." 52)

The agony of Christ: V. 35. **And He went forward a little, and fell on the ground, and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from Him.** V. 36. **And He said, Abba, Father, all things are possible unto Thee; take away this cup from Me; nevertheless, not what I will, but what Thou wilt.** V. 37. **And He cometh and findeth them sleeping, and saith unto Peter, Simon, sleepest thou? Couldest not thou watch one hour?** V. 38. **Watch ye and pray lest ye enter into temptation. The spirit truly is ready, but the flesh is weak.** V. 39. **And again He went away, and prayed, and spake the same words.** V. 40. **And when He returned, He found them asleep again, (for their eyes were heavy,) neither wist they what to answer Him.** V. 41. **And He cometh the third time and saith unto them, Sleep on now and take your rest; it is enough, the hour is come. Behold, the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners.** V. 42. **Rise up, let us go; lo, he that betrayeth Me is at hand.** It was Christ, the man, the human being, that had uttered the pitiful appeal to the three disciples to aid Him at least by watching and praying with Him. And it was His human nature, aided and sustained, indeed, by His divine nature, that here suffered the wrath of the just God. As wave after wave of anguish swept over Him, threatening to engulf and overwhelm Him, the presence of even these devoted disciples became too much for His weakness. He went on from there a little distance, farther into the darkness and loneliness of the garden. Again and again He fell to the ground; it was a long, desperate struggle. And all the while His soul was battling in prayer with God, the sum and substance of His pleading being that the hour, this hour of terrible anguish, of unspeakable torture, might pass by without touching Him. He prays that this be done, if it be possible. He knows that all things are possible to His Father, but He knows also that there can be no contradiction between God's justice and His love. The evangelist records a part of His urgent prayer: My Lord and My Father, all things are possible to Thee; let this cup pass by Me, so it may not touch Me! What deep, incomprehensible humiliation on the part of Christ! And yet there is not the slightest murmuring or opposing the will of God. The just and stern Judge of the sins of the world is still His dear Father, under whose will He places His human will without restriction or reservation: But not what I will, but what Thou. The sentence is short, incomplete, as one would speak under the influence of great emotion. He sacrifices His will for the good of the world, for its redemption. After some time, Jesus returned to His disciples and found them sleeping. They had not been equal to the test which He had proposed to them. Sorrow and dread had so weighted down their eyelids that they could not throw off sleep. It was Peter whom the Lord addressed in a reproachful tone: Simon, sleepest thou? Not even one hour couldest thou watch? The name Simon itself is a rebuke, for it was the name he bore before becoming the disciple of Christ. Loudly, emphatically, and repeatedly he had protested his ability to bear everything with the Lord, even death; and here he was not even able to watch with and for Him for one short hour! Again Jesus admonishes the disciples to watch and pray, to be wide awake and to use the weapon of prayer. For the spirit, the new man

52) Luther, 13b, 1767.

in them, may be ever so willing and ready to work for Christ, yet the flesh, their old weak nature, is weak and stands in need of assistance in spiritual matters all the time. If only all Christians would remember this admonition in all times of spiritual crises, there would be little need of special efforts and unusual sacrifices after the damage has been done. A second and a third time Jesus left the disciples to return to His place of prayer and to wrestle with God in the fierce struggle because of the sins of mankind. When He returned to the disciples the second time, He found them asleep again, in spite of His earnest warning, and their eyes seemed weighted down with sleep; their answer to His call was given in a dazed manner, and they had no excuse to offer; they were helplessly overcome. In the mean time the struggle was continuing in the soul of the Lord, but He was gaining strength toward its close, He was conquering the fear of death, the pains of hell. When He came back to His disciples for the third time, His words sounded almost crisp: Are you still sleeping and resting nicely? It is enough! If not expressed in so many words, the meaning found by some commentators seems to be contained here: The struggle has been brought to an end, the agony has been conquered. Further suffering is before Me; I am about to be delivered into the hands of the heathen, the sinners. But the prospect holds no terrors for Me, though I know that the traitor is even now on his way and at the gates of the garden. Arise; let us go! The Scripture must be fulfilled and the final conquest made. Christ is ever the Champion of His believers, He goes before them and leads the way; He also battles for them and overcomes the enemies in their stead. But He does not want them to sit idly by and do nothing. They shall follow in His footsteps, go the way that He has gone, and in His power vanquish the enemies.

The Capture of Jesus. Mark 14, 43—52.

The betrayal: V. 43. **And immediately, while He yet spake, cometh Judas, one of the Twelve, and with him a great multitude with swords and staves, from the chief priests and the scribes and the elders.** V. 44. **And he that betrayed Him had given them a token, saying, Whomsoever I shall kiss, that same is He; take Him, and lead Him away safely.** V. 45. **And as soon as he was come, he goeth straightway to Him and saith, Master, Master; and kissed Him.** Before Jesus had finished His last admonition to His disciples, Judas with his eager band came into the neighborhood, appeared upon the scene. As if to heighten the emphasis upon the heinousness of his transgression, he is called by his full name, Judas Iscariot, the man from Kerioth, one of the Twelve. His treason was all the more dastardly, since he had enjoyed the trust of the Lord and had heard all the confiding talks which the Master had given those of the inner circle. With him came a band (fitting name!) of the servants of the high priests and scribes and elders. As though anticipating resistance on the part of the followers of Christ, there were swords as well as stout cudgels, or clubs, to be used by the members of the party. Perhaps the members of the Sanhedrin hoped to take Christ with all His disciples and thus, at one swoop, to exterminate the hated party. The traitor had used cautious cunning in planning the arrest of Jesus by giving the band a definite sign, previously agreed upon. A kiss, the sign of friendship and love, should be the token to them. That Man they should be sure to take, leading Him away safely, either so that they need fear nothing from Him in the nature of an attempted escape, or that they must be on their guard and watch the prisoner carefully, lest He walk from their midst, as He had done before, in similar situations. Judas might have saved his breath. The matter was long ago out of his hands and beyond his authority. But Judas lost no time. As quickly as possible he stepped up to Jesus, addressing Him with the reverential term "rabbi" and kissing Him most tenderly, or again and again; disgusting, revolting hypocrisy! With good reason he has been, since that time, an example of warning to the believers of all times. So low may one fall that was once a disciple of Christ, but then has deliberately denied faith and good conscience. History tells of many such Judases that delivered their former fellow-Christians into the hands of their enemies and gave up the most sacred possessions and rights into the hands of the adversaries. There is no meanness so great as that of a former friend.

The capture: V. 46. **And they laid their hands on Him, and took Him.** V. 47. **And one of them that stood by drew a sword, and smote a servant of the high priest, and cut off his ear.** V. 48. **And Jesus answered and said unto them, Are ye come out, as against a thief, with swords and with staves to take Me?** V. 49. **I was daily with you in the Temple teaching, and ye took Me not; but the Scriptures must be fulfilled.** V. 50. **And they all forsook Him and fled.** V. 51. **And there followed Him a certain young man, having a linen cloth cast about his naked body; and the young men laid hold on him;** v. 52. **and he left the linen cloth, and fled from them naked.** Not the slightest resistance or show of resistance did Jesus show His captors. They laid their hands on Him and took Him captive, formally arrested Him. But this fact was too much for the fiery Peter, whose name is not mentioned in this account. When the profane hands of the servants touched his Master, his anger overwhelmed him. Misunderstanding a remark of the Lord made earlier in the evening concerning the necessity of being fully prepared,

as for warfare, Luke 22, 36—38, Peter had brought a sword, which he now drew. Striking the servant of the high priest, he cut off his right ear. That was carnal, foolish zeal, no matter from what angle it is viewed. Christ's work should not be carried on by means of worldly power and authority. As the kingdom of Christ is not of this world, so the means He employs for its propagation and defense have nothing in common with the measures advocated by the children of this world and by scatter-brained fanatics. The spiritual sword, the Word of God, is the only weapon of offense and of defense which the Church should wield, but that she should wield skilfully and powerfully, to confound and convince the gainsayers. At the same time, however, Jesus had a very impressive word to say to the members of the capturing party. It was a disgrace for them, it reflected upon them, that they came out with swords and with clubs, as though they were out to arrest a dangerous robber. He reminds them that they might have had opportunity daily to apprehend Him, as He taught in the Temple. This showed very plainly that the present situation was not due to their planning. It would have been an easy matter for Him to obtain His liberty. But the matter of His capture in this way was done in fulfilment of the Scriptures. Unwittingly they were serving to establish the truth of prophecy. Not only the Passion as such, but the individual incidents of Christ's suffering had been foretold, and it was imperative that the Word of God stand true and unassailed, also against the scoffers in our days. This word of Jesus, whereby He yielded to His fate and willingly placed Himself into the hands of the enemies, proved too much for the disciples; it was the rock of offense over which they stumbled. Panic-stricken, they leave their Master and flee with precipitate haste, lest they also be caught by the band and share the Lord's fate. All the proud, self-confident assertions of a few hours before were forgotten. Even so many Christians that were eager with their protestations of loyalty when there was no danger near have left Christ and His Word and Church at the first indication of possible suffering on His account. There is an interesting incident related at this point. It seems that a young man living in one of the houses of the neighborhood had been awakened by the noise of the party, and, hastily throwing a linen cloth about his naked body, went out to see what the trouble was about. Seeing that Christ had been captured, he followed for some distance, either out of curiosity or from apprehension for His safety. But his garment made him all the more conspicuous on the moonlight night, and therefore some members of the party from Jerusalem tried to catch him. But he slipped the linen cloth from his body, leaving it in their hands, while he escaped from them naked. From the earliest times many commentators have held that this young man was Mark himself, who tells this incident which made such a deep impression upon him on the night of Christ's arrest, and perhaps fully decided him in the Lord's favor.

The Trial before the High Priest.

Mark 14, 53—65.

The first part of the trial: V. 53. **And they led Jesus away to the high priest; and with him were assembled all the chief priests and the elders and the scribes.** V. 54. **And Peter followed Him afar off, even into the palace of the high priest; and he sat with the servants, and warmed himself at the fire.** V. 55. **And the chief priests and all the council sought for witness against Jesus to put Him to death, and found none.** V. 56. **For many bare false witness against Him, but their witness agreed not together.** V. 57. **And there arose certain, and bare false witness against Him, saying,** v. 58. **We heard Him say, I will destroy this Temple that is made with hands, and within three days I will build another made without hands.** V. 59. **But neither so did their witness agree together.** As soon as the band of servants, under the leadership of Judas, started out from Jerusalem, the chief priests had undoubtedly sent notice to all the members of the Sanhedrin for an extraordinary session to be held at once in the palace of the high priest of the year. It made no difference, in this case, that they were celebrating a great festival, most of them having hardly finished the paschal meal. Their glee over the probable early realization of their hopes put them in high good humor, in which they could afford to disregard the customs and traditions which they otherwise regarded more important than the works of love themselves. Though it must have been about the hour of midnight, the members of the council responded with great willingness. And so the palace of the high priest Caiaphas was the scene of a most peculiar proceeding, of a court session which is without equal in the history of the world. "This is surely terrible to hear, and yet should be considered with great seriousness that these two orders or estates, the priestly family and the kingly family, are here united against Christ. The fathers and forefathers of the high priests were Moses, Aaron, Levi, and these were the children and descendants of the former. And yet the children of these noted patriarchs have come to that point, that they wilfully betray Christ and condemn Him to death. The fathers of the counselors had been Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Judah, and these were the children and descendants of the former; and yet such noted people come to that point that they betray and sell their God who was promised to them! It surely would not be surprising if God would be so angry with both forms of government that neither priests nor temporal government would exist; for if these

two estates persecute Christ, who then will protect Him on earth?" 53)

Meanwhile curiosity had gotten the better of Peter. He had overcome his fear to that extent that he followed the party and his Master at a safe distance to the palace of the high priest. Having obtained permission, he entered through the arched doorway into the court of the house. The palace probably combined the features of Roman architecture with the style of Judea, being built around a court which was partly or entirely open to the sky. Here the servants had built a fire (whence the name *atrium*, which really means "blackened by smoke," for this part of the house), and were trying to drive away the chill of the spring night. Peter joined them about the fire and warmed himself. It is never a safe and advisable thing for a Christian to seek the company of the enemies of Christ, unless the work of his calling brings him into contact with them, perhaps even places him at the same work-table with them. In such a case great wisdom is required and that prudence which only the Word of God can teach. Here was a case of courting danger without call or reason.

The so-called session of court had begun when Peter came. It was probably only now and then that he could get a glimpse of the assembly-hall where the council sat in session. From the beginning the trial was a blasphemous farce. For not only the high priests, but the entire Sanhedrin deliberately set about to find testimony against Christ in order that they might with some show of right condemn Him to die. But the record of Jesus had been so clean that not the slightest hint of real evidence against Him could be found, John 8, 46. It was an exasperating situation. No matter how many witnesses were announced and even previously instructed, their testimony was not the same, it did not agree. Finally two men were found that garbled the story of John 2, 19—21, declaring that Jesus had referred to the Temple built by Herod, the sanctuary of the Jews. And still their testimony was not the same; they did not agree on points that were essential to make their witness valid. The whole trial seemed doomed to hopeless disintegration.

The sentence of the council: V. 60. **And the high priest stood up in the midst and asked Jesus, saying, Answerest Thou nothing? What is it which these witness against Thee?** V. 61. **But He held His peace and answered nothing. Again the high priest asked Him and said unto Him, Art Thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?** V. 62. **And Jesus said, I am; and ye shall see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of Power and coming in the clouds of heaven.** V. 63. **Then the high priest rent his clothes and saith, What need we any further witnesses?** V. 64. **Ye have heard the blasphemy; what think ye? And they all condemned Him to be guilty of death.** V. 65. **And some began to spit on Him, and to cover His face, and to buffet Him, and to say unto Him, Prophesy; and the servants did strike Him with the palms of their hands.** Caiaphas felt the imperative need of quick action to save the day, for the matter was rapidly coming to a point where the entire council would be obliged to confess its helplessness. Arising therefore from his chairman's seat, he steps forward into the semicircle formed by the chairs of the members. His first thought was that of browbeating Jesus, and thus provoking Him to some statement which could be used against Him: Answerest Thou nothing to these condemnatory charges? But Jesus kept His silence and answered never a word. In many cases, where the enemies of Christ bring accusations against Christ and the Christian Church, that Christianity is a dangerous religion, that it stultifies the intellect, etc., this is nothing but false testimony, which they do not believe themselves, where it would be a waste of breath to argue and to try to convince them of the contrary. The helplessness of the witnesses and of the council, the judges, was in this case so obvious that any argument on Christ's part would have been useless and would have spoiled the effect.

But the high priest feels that he must save the day at all costs. So he finally asks the direct question: Art Thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed? Here is a specimen of high-priestly religion. For the expression was chosen deliberately, a hypocritical term of reverence in refraining from using the actual name of God. In such matters the high priests could be extremely punctilious. Jesus now determined to end this farce, which must have hurt Him to the depths of His soul. He frankly answers: I am. But He adds that these His false accusers and judges would see Him, the Son of Man, sitting at the right hand of the power of God, and coming with the clouds of heaven as His throne. When these hypocrites see Him again, it will be in His capacity as the Judge of the world. And how thoroughly will these unjust blasphemers be filled with terror when this same Christ whom they rejected will sit in judgment upon them and require a full account at their hands! But the high priest had gained his object; he thought he had a word now which he could use to establish a case. In order to get the proper dramatic effect, he took hold of his mantle and perhaps both of his tunics, and tore them open, ripped them to pieces at the top. That was a sign of deep grief, of intense suffering. He meant his act to imply that it hurt him more than words could express to hear the prisoner make such a statement. He rejected all further testimony as useless; had they not all heard the blasphemy that this man claimed to be the Son of God?

53) Luther, 13b, 1772.

There was but one question to ask yet: What is the fitting penalty, in your opinion, for such a transgression? And with great unanimity the well-instructed hypocrites took their leaders' cue and condemned Christ to be guilty of death. "Therefore Christ is put to death, not in a tumult, nor by rebels, also not by them that did not possess the proper authority, but by those was He killed that had the proper authority. Just as it is done in our days: all the harm that is done to the Christian Church is done by those having the proper authority. Just as we must confess and say of our persecutors that they are princes, bishops, rulers that have power, even from God, both as concerns worldly dominion and also the power which they might have in the Church by God's Word, if they would only use it correctly. Such as have the full and proper authority are now persecuting the Gospel." 54)

The finding of the court and the sentence based upon it was the signal for a general abandonment of restraint; for with the sentence of death hanging over Him Christ had become an outcast, Lev. 24, 16. The counselors themselves began the cruel mockery, and the servants were only too willing to follow their example. They spat upon Him as an object of utter contempt; they covered a cloth around and over His head and beat Him with their fists, asking meanwhile in a jeering tone that He should prophesy and designate the offenders. And the servants added to the shame of their masters by receiving Him with slaps of the open hand—a cruel and painful torture. "This, then, is the hearing and the accusation which was done in the house of the high priest Caiaphas. And all this is written for our learning that we may know that Christ humbled Himself so deeply for our sake and permitted Himself to be accused, condemned, and killed as the greatest criminal; though He is altogether innocent, so that even His adversaries are obliged to confess secretly, feeling it in their heart that there was no cause of death to be found in Him." 55)

The Denial of Peter. Mark 14, 66—72.

The first denial: V. 66. **And as Peter was beneath in the palace, there cometh one of the maids of the high priest.** V. 67. **And when she saw Peter warming himself, she looked upon him and said, And thou also wast with Jesus of Nazareth.** V. 68. **But he denied, saying, I know not, neither understand I what thou sayest. And he went out into the porch; and the cock crew.** Beneath in the court Peter was; the session of the Sanhedrin was held in an upper room. He was sitting at the fire, where the light from the flames brought out his features very plainly. Now one of the maids of the high priest, the janitress that had admitted Peter into the vestibule, walking past the fire and seeing Peter sitting there and warming himself, had a good chance to observe his features. She promptly pointed him out to the rest of the servants, accusing him of belonging to the party of this Jesus of Nazareth. The matter rather took Peter by surprise; he may have thought himself secure, since he had been admitted to the court. But he thinks himself quick-witted in feigning lack of understanding: I neither know nor understand what thou sayest. It was a lie and a denial of his Lord, as Peter should have felt at once. As a matter of fact, his conscience seems to have been a little uneasy, for he now left his place by the fire and went out into the arched doorway, in the shadow of the portico.

The second and third denials: V. 69. **And a maid saw him again, and began to say to them that stood by, This is one of them.** V. 70. **And he denied it again. And a little after, they that stood by said again to Peter, Surely thou art one of them; for thou art a Galilean, and thy speech agreeth thereto.** V. 71. **But he began to curse and to swear, saying, I know not this Man of whom ye speak.** V. 72. **And the second time the cock crew. And Peter called to mind the word that Jesus said unto him, Before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny Me thrice. And when he thought thereon, he wept.** The servants were naturally excited over the trial that was taking place upstairs, and many were the conjectures that were made concerning the Nazarene and His followers. That they were in no gentle mood with respect to the disciples of Jesus may be readily surmised. It was not long, therefore, before a maid, one that had probably heard the first one speak or had now come to take her place, once more pointed out Peter to the others that were near by: This man belongs to the party of the accused. Hardly had the words left her mouth when Peter denied the accusation. But his very eagerness and a certain furtiveness in his behavior now made him a marked man in the court. An hour later, therefore, the attack was renewed. A number of bystanders joined forces in questioning Peter. In addition to other proofs which pointed in his direction, there was the matter of his dialect, which openly proclaimed him a Galilean. The disciples were known to be men of Galilee, and so the inference was plain. Peter was in hot water. He had forgotten his fervent promise to his Master of a few hours ago. His one thought was to save himself from this predicament and to escape with his life. And so he denies his Lord for the third time. And not satisfied with a mere denial, which seemed too tame under the circumstances, he added cursing and an oath. Thus Peter had renounced his Lord and Master, his Savior, absolutely. He had fallen from grace, he had denied the faith. But the Lord had not forgotten him.

54) Luther, 13b, 1773.
55) Luther, 13b, 1783.

The second crowing of the cock reminded Peter of the word of the Lord concerning his threefold denial. And thinking thereon, or, covering his head in bitter shame, he rushed forth into the night and wept bitterly. That was true repentance. Peter knew that he no longer was worthy to be called a disciple of the Lord, but he remembered also that the Lord was long-suffering and merciful and had given him many splendid promises as to his future life. Trusting in the mercy of the Lord he sought and found forgiveness of his sin and again was assured of the love of his Master.

Summary. *Judas makes an offer to betray Jesus after the Lord has been anointed in the house of Simon of Bethany; Christ celebrates the paschal meal with His disciples, institutes the Lord's Supper, warns them against being offended, suffers the agony of Gethsemane, is betrayed and captured, tried by the council of the Jews, condemned to death, and denied by Peter.*

CHAPTER 15.

The Trial before Pilate. Mark 15, 1—14.

Jesus delivered to the Gentiles: V. 1. **And straightway in the morning the chief priests held a consultation with the elders and scribes and the whole council, and bound Jesus, and carried Him away, and delivered Him to Pilate.** The account of the events of that memorable Friday morning, as given by Mark, is very brief, since he omits many incidents that do not bear directly upon the Passion story. His account is characterized by the usual vividness and action. Though it must have been some time after midnight before the members of the Sanhedrin left the house of the high priest, there was little rest for them. For without delay, very early in the morning, as soon as the light of the new morning permitted it, they had another meeting. Some commentators state that it was necessary to have a second meeting to ratify a sentence of death, and that this meeting had to be held in the Hall of Polished Stones in the Temple. The importance of the session is indicated by the fact that not only the various groups of the Sanhedrin are mentioned, the high priests, the elders, the scribes, but that their total number is expressly stated to have comprised the chief council. There certainly was need of their coming together for earnest, anxious consultation; for though they had passed the sentence of death, they no longer had the right to carry this into execution. Only the Roman procurator had the power over life and death, and before him they could not urge the fact that Jesus claimed to be the Son of God. That was no political offense, no transgression of the laws of the empire. But they finally agreed upon a course of action, and then, having bound Jesus, they led Him away and delivered Him to Pilate, the Roman governor, or procurator, who usually came up to the feast to prevent any disturbances that might arise at such a great concourse of people.

The hearing before Pilate: V. 2. **And Pilate asked Him, Art Thou the King of the Jews? And He, answering, said unto him, Thou sayest it.** V. 3. **And the chief priests accused Him of many things; but He answered nothing.** V. 4. **And Pilate asked Him again, saying, Answerest Thou nothing? Behold how many things they witness against Thee.** V. 5. **But Jesus yet answered nothing, so that Pilate marveled.** The question of Pilate indicated in what form the accusation of the Jewish authorities against Christ had come before him. Since the enemies had no tangible evidence against the Lord, they construed His confession concerning His Messiahship in such a way as to give it political significance: The Christ, regarding whom every Jew believed that He would establish a temporal kingdom. They insinuated that this Man was a rebel against the Roman government. That was the meaning of Pilate's question. He may have thought that he here had a case of a periodic Messianic disturbance, although he had the conviction from the start that there was a great deal of jealousy on the part of the Jews involved in the affair. The answer of Jesus to this direct question was just as brief. But the explanation which He afterwards added, as given by John, 18, 36. 37, showed Pilate that the accusation had nothing to do with political affairs and dangers to the government. And the chief priests felt the weakness of their position, since they did not insist upon this one point, but kept bringing other accusations, of a more or less vague character, many of them, their idea being to swamp Pilate with the mass of material and thus to cause his assent to their wishes without making a careful examination of the evidence. Pilate felt the vagueness and uncertainty of the accusers, and in the same strain asked Jesus whether He had no answer to all these charges, since they were made with such vehemence and bitterness. But Jesus observed a majestic silence. Why waste breath when it was perfectly obvious to every sane person that these were nothing but trumped-up charges, without the shadow of a foundation which would stand before any real court of justice in the world. Not so much as a single word did He answer, for He knew also very well that Pilate felt the weakness of the accusers and believed Him to be innocent.

Pilate's attempt to release Jesus: V. 6. **Now at that feast he released unto them one prisoner, whomsoever they desired.** V. 7.

And there was one named Barabbas, which lay bound with them that had made insurrection with him, who had committed murder in the insurrection. V. 8. And the multitude crying aloud began to desire him to do as he had ever done unto them. V. 9. But Pilate answered them, saying, Will ye that I release unto you the King of the Jews? V. 10. For he knew that the chief priests had delivered Him for envy. V. 11. But the chief priests moved the people that he should rather release Barabbas unto them. V. 12. And Pilate answered and said again unto them, What will ye, then, that I shall do unto Him whom ye call the King of the Jews? V. 13. And they cried out again, Crucify Him! V. 14. Then Pilate said unto them, Why, what evil hath He done? And they cried out the more exceedingly, Crucify Him! What a picture the evangelist paints here! The surging mob before the Praetorium, rabble, for the most part, but reenforced by the friends of the Jewish councilors; the weak, vacillating procurator, helpless before the bloodthirstiness of the multitude, now appearing on the platform before them, then disappearing for a while, racking his brains for some way out of the difficulty; the high priests and the members of the Sanhedrin, circulating around through the mob, holding the excitement at its highest pitch, since their understanding and consequent use of mob psychology enabled them to dominate the situation. Pilate had introduced the custom of giving some prisoner his liberty on this feast, the one whose release the people desired being usually set free. This custom had now practically become an obligation. The people expected this boon at Easter; and both he and they thought of this fact. Pilate believed that he could still save the situation by giving the people the choice between Jesus and Barabbas. For the latter was an exceptionally fierce criminal. As the leader or one of the foremost in a band of rebels, in one of the many insurrections that were troubling the government, he had committed a murder. He had been caught with his accomplices and was now awaiting his punishment, bound in jail. The governor felt that no people could be so depraved as to ask for such an outcast of society. But hardly had he made up his mind just how to manage the affair, when the people, surging forward, began to demand that he do according to custom, that he grant them that which he had always given them. Their request was accompanied by loud bellowing of the rabble, who instinctively felt that they had the situation in their hands. The weak proposal of Pilate confirmed them in their belief: Is it your wish and desire, shall I release to you the King of the Jews? His choice of names for Christ at that moment was probably most unfortunate, for its very use was a challenge and an insult to the members of the Sanhedrin. Ordinarily this scheme of playing off the people with their champion, whom they had hailed with such shouts of joy a few days before, against the priests, whose rule was not always relished by the common members of the Jewish Church, might have been successful. For Pilate rightly surmised, and was being confirmed in his belief with every new move of the accusers, that jealousy, envy, was the real reason for delivering Jesus to the jurisdiction of his court. But the priests had been too successful in stirring up, in exciting, in instigating the people. There was no longer even the faintest resemblance to an orderly trial with cool and sensible heads on both sides. The people, under the careful prompting of the high priests, were fully convinced in their own minds that they actually, for their own persons, preferred to have Barabbas released to them. Another appeal of Pilate: What, then, is your wish that I should do with Him you call King of the Jews? The repetition of the hated title was again a foolish move on Pilate's part. Lashed to a perfect spasm of fury, the people, led by the high priests, yelled: Crucify Him! Pilate's weak remonstrance as to any guilt on His part was like the chirping of a cricket in the midst of a tornado. For with mounting rage the bellowing cry rolled out through the narrow streets over the city: Crucify Him! The time for reason and sense had gone by. The unleashed rage of the rabble wanted blood, and Pilate, although convinced of Christ's innocence, knew that the situation was beyond him, for this cry that arose from the people, beyond all measure, showed him that it was too late to insist upon justice. Many a so-called man of the world, that thinks he is neutral with regard to Christianity and believes in letting well enough alone, since undoubtedly the Christian Church is doing much for the community, has followed the example of Pilate in a crisis. Feeling that his original conviction was the right, the correct one, he yet, in times of popular agitation and demonstration, has joined the rank of the rabble that cheer to-day and curse to-morrow, that cry "Hosannah" on Sunday and bellow a hoarse "Crucify Him!" on the following Friday.

Condemnation, Crucifixion, and Death of Jesus. Mark 15, 15—37.

The sentence and the mockery by the soldiers: **V. 15. And so Pilate, willing to content the people, released Barabbas unto them, and delivered Jesus, when he had scourged Him, to be crucified. V. 16. And the soldiers led Him away into the hall, called Praetorium; and they call together the whole band. V. 17. And they clothed Him with purple, and platted a crown of thorns, and put it about His head, v. 18. and began to salute Him, Hail, King of the Jews! V. 19. And they smote Him on the head with a reed, and did spit upon Him, and, bowing their knees, worshiped Him. A most**

significant phrase: Willing, not to do justice, to insist upon the justice for which the Roman courts were known, but: willing to content the people, to give the mob the satisfaction it demanded, to yield to them all that they wanted. It was a sad travesty upon justice, a trial which would have been carried out with greater show of right and fair play in the most ignorant barbarian country. He released to them Barabbas, a fitting sarcasm. One more murderer more or less in a whole nation of murderers would make little difference; let the innocent people be confined in prison and be adjudged guilty of death, while the murderers are not only at large, but in the enjoyment of the highest positions! Jesus, His flagellation, or scourging, having taken place, was officially delivered to be crucified according to the Roman method of dealing with criminals found guilty of death. Note: The scourging, though really pertaining to the acts which Pilate did before the condemnation of Jesus, in order to awaken the pity of the people and thus to gain his object, may also be thought to be, and is here so represented, as the first part of the agony of the crucifixion. It was a fitting introduction to the tortures of the mockery which the cruelty of the soldiers invented and which the anguish of the cross crowned. For it was now the soldier's opportunity; the prisoner was in their hands. They led Him, first of all, into the court of the palace, which served for their barracks and was called Praetorium. Here they called together the entire cohort, or band. Here was a rare chance for sport in which they delighted. In rough playfulness, like children that delight in playing at dressing up, they put a mantle of a purple color upon Him, to represent the kingly garment. A wreath, or crown, of thorns was quickly platted and placed about His head, fittingly to represent the golden circle of the earthly rulers. And then the jeering mockery began, which reflected also upon the Jews. They began to greet, to salute Him, to hail Him as the King of the Jews; for this title they found exceptionally funny: a fitting king for this people that was hated and despised by the Romans. With the reed which they had previously given Him in place of a scepter they now, as the fun began to pall on them, hit Him on the head, to drive the sharp spikes into the tender flesh of the head. They spat upon Him as upon a vile and loathsome creature; they fell upon their knees in scoffing worship. Such was the Savior's experience, for His Passion stands out most prominently in the whole account. He gave His back to the smiters, and His cheeks to them that plucked off the hair; He did not hide His face from shame and spitting, Is. 50, 6. It was the mercy and the long-suffering of the Redeemer of the world.

Christ led to His crucifixion: V. 20. **And when they had mocked Him, they took off the purple from Him, and put His own clothes on Him, and led Him out to crucify Him.** V. 21. **And they compel one Simon, a Cyrenian, who passed by, coming out of the country, the father of Alexander and Rufus, to bear His cross.** V. 22. **And they bring Him unto the place Golgotha, which is, being interpreted, The Place of a Skull.** V. 23. **And they gave Him to drink wine mingled with myrrh; but He received it not.** V. 24. **And when they had crucified Him, they parted His garments, casting lots upon them, what every man should take.** V. 25. **And it was the third hour, and they crucified Him.** The soldiers soon grew tired of their sport; their victim did not react properly. He bore everything with sublime, majestic fortitude and patience, instead of crying out in pain and anger, as they had anticipated. They therefore took the mantle of mockery off Him and put His own clothes back on Him. The last act of the greatest drama in the world was about to begin; they led Him out from the palace of the governor and the city to crucify Him, to carry out the unjust decree of an unjust judge. Now Jesus had been under terrific physical, mental, and spiritual strain during the last days, and especially during the past twelve hours. The agony of Gethsemane, the capture, the trial in the palace of the high priest with the mockery heaped upon Him, the lack of rest during the night, the bloody scourging which He had just been compelled to endure, all this now combined to sap His strength. And so the soldiers, as the procession had reached the open space before the gates, made use of a right which they possessed, namely, to impress into service any man who happened to meet them. It so chanced that Simon, a Cyrenian, was coming in from the country. He may have been a belated pilgrim, or he may have gone out early on this morning, since the day was in some respects not held quite so strictly as the Sabbath. The evangelist remarks that this Simon was the father of two men that seem to have been well known to his readers, Alexander and Rufus, Rom. 16, 13; Acts 19, 33. So Simon, drafted into service, here had what he probably later considered the great honor of bearing the cross of Jesus for Him. But the physical weakness of Jesus was becoming greater continually. It was now necessary for the soldiers to support Him and probably to carry Him the last part of the way, to the place known as Golgotha, explained by the evangelist as meaning the place of a skull, on account of the peculiar shape of the hill, which resembled the upper part of a human skull. It was the custom to give to the condemned some potion which would tend to deaden the sensibilities, a mixture of wine, or vinegar, with myrrh or gall. But Jesus refused this drink; He wanted to endure His sufferings with full consciousness. And so they fastened Him to the cross; they carried out the governor's sentence. The crucified criminal was

divested of his clothing, with the probable exception of a loin-cloth, and therefore the soldiers took the garments of Jesus, putting up the various pieces into four heaps or parts, and then gambled for the several heaps, the highest number taking the best clothes. The coat was, according to the account of John 19, 24, made a separate stake, since it could not be divided. Mark notes the hour of the day, nine o'clock in the morning. Thus did the crucifixion of the Lord of heaven and earth take place. The princes of this world crucified the Lord of glory, 1 Cor. 2, 8. Christ suffered the punishment of a criminal, 1 Pet. 2, 24. The chastisement of our peace lay upon Him, Is. 53, 5. He endured the shame and disgrace of this form of punishment, Heb. 12, 2. With His free will and consent He was hanged to the tree of cursing, Gal. 3, 13. His entire Passion was for our benefit, for the blessing of the whole world.

The sufferings of the cross: V. 26. **And the superscription of His accusation was written over, The King of the Jews.** V. 27. **And with Him they crucify two thieves, the one on His right hand and the other on His left.** V. 28. **And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, And He was numbered with the transgressors.** V. 29. **And they that passed by railed on Him, wagging their heads and saying, Ah, Thou that destroyest the Temple, and buildest it in three days,** v. 30. **save Thyself, and come down from the cross!** V. 31. **Likewise also the chief priests, mocking, said among themselves with the scribes, He saved others; Himself He cannot save.** V. 32. **Let Christ, the King of Israel, descend now from the cross, that we may see and believe. And they that were crucified with Him reviled Him.** In a spirit which savored of vengeful spite, Pilate had prepared a superscription for the cross of Jesus, stating the cause of His punishment, in much the same form as it had been given to Him by the Jewish authorities: The King of the Jews. Neither he nor the Jews themselves knew how true the words were, that this man was indeed, as the Redeemer of the world, the King of all mankind. But they had rejected Him and His message and thereby wilfully excluded themselves from the blessings of the Kingdom. The evangelist notes the exactness with which the Old Testament prophecies were being fulfilled in all the incidents of the Passion, even in those of a secondary nature, by remarking that two robbers, common criminals, were crucified at the same time, one on either side of Jesus, placing Him on an absolute level with the scum of the earth, Is. 53, 12. And now came the procession from Jerusalem, unconsciously, but none the less surely, to fulfil another prophecy which was spoken concerning the suffering of the Savior, Ps. 22, 7—17. First came the common people, with whom the bloodthirstiness had now abated, leaving in its stead the satisfaction of having gained their object and having forced the procurator to do their bidding. They moved their heads from one side to the other, as though questioning the sanity of the Lord in making such statements as they quoted, of His being able to destroy the Temple and to erect it again in three days. Jeeringly they challenge Him to save Himself by stepping down from the cross. Then came the high priests, not minding, for once, the contamination which might result to them from mingling with the common people. They called out to each other and to some of the scribes that also came to enjoy the spectacle in gleeful mockery. They now felt free to admit what they formerly would have denied with the greatest vehemence, the fact that Christ had actually helped others. They are merely surprised and act astonished over the fact that He cannot help Himself. They want a proof of His Messiahship. If He should come down from the cross in plain sight before them, then they would be willing to believe Him. All this was hypocritical mockery. They had rejected Him as the Messiah of Israel, they had hardened their hearts against His message of salvation, they had refused to believe and to draw the correct conclusions in the case of far greater miracles; and they would not have believed Him now. And finally, the robbers that were hanging on either side of the Lord, impelled, perhaps, by the excruciating agony of the crucifixion, began to vituperate Him, to heap blasphemous epithets upon Him. It was a veritable orgy of blasphemy of every kind that was held there under the cross. And all the time the Lord was hanging there, meekly, patiently suffering and dying for them, for the very men that were casting the most insulting epithets into His face. That is one of the most inexplicable marvels of history.

The last hours and the death of Jesus: V. 33. **And when the sixth hour was come, there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour.** V. 34. **And at the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani? which is, being interpreted, My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?** V. 35. **And some of them that stood by, when they heard it, said, Behold, He calleth Elias.** V. 36. **And one ran and filled a sponge full of vinegar, and put it on a reed, and gave Him to drink, saying, Let alone; let us see whether Elias will come to take Him down.** V. 37. **And Jesus cried with a loud voice, and gave up the ghost.** Meanwhile it had become high noon. Suddenly, without warning, darkness came upon the whole earth, not the darkness of a solar eclipse, for it was now the time of the full moon, nor of dense clouds, nor of a desert wind-storm. The sun was blotted out, it lost its light; it was a miracle of God. The entire universe was suffering with the Son of God; the sun was hiding his face in

shame, on account of the spectacle of men murdering their Creator. The significance of these three hours, during which the face of the Savior was mercifully hidden from the curious gaze of a blasphemous multitude, is shown in the Savior's cry at the end of these three terrible hours. Out of a heart breaking with grief and shame over the fathomless abyss of sin the cry of anguish is wrung forth: "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" This depth of humiliation on the part of the Redeemer is beyond human comprehension. Those three hours of darkness cover the mystery of unfathomable depravity on the part of the entire human race, and of inexpressible love on the part of the Savior. He had been forsaken by God; He had been given into the power of death and hell. God had withdrawn from Him the mercy of His presence; He had suffered the pain of being condemned to all eternity for the sin of the world. Jesus here felt the full force, the full terror of the divine wrath which has been kindled on account of the millionfold trespasses of mankind. He drained the cup of the curse of God to the last dregs; He had suffered the eternal damnation of hell. The eternal Son of God in the eternal depths of hell! But all this was done for our salvation. The punishment of hell lay upon Him, in order that we might go free. For note that He clung to His Lord, His heavenly Father, in the midst of all this terror. He was still His God, His highest good, to whom He offered full obedience and thus conquered wrath, hell, and damnation.

Jesus had called out the last words in the Aramaic tongue, just as the evangelist has recorded the words. Some of those that were standing near by, whether of the soldiers or of the Jews, deliberately misunderstood His words and gleefully explained them to the rest as though the Lord had called upon the Prophet Elijah to help Him in this last extremity. And when Jesus thereupon cried out in His thirst and one of the bystanders, more soft-hearted than the rest, hurried over with a spongeful of vinegar on a reed to give Him some alleviation of His burning suffering, he could not refrain from joining in the jeering, whether Elijah would come and help Him down from the cross. But now the end was at hand. Jesus gave a loud cry, a shout of triumph and joy, in which He also commended His soul into the keeping of His Father, and then He quietly breathed forth His spirit, He gave up His soul, His life. It was a true death; it was a complete severance of soul and body. But He was not overcome by His sufferings, He did not die of exhaustion. His dying was an act of His own free will. Voluntarily, in His own power, He placed His soul into the hands of His Father. He had power to lay it down, John 10, 18. And as the Stronger One, in dying, He conquered death. He gave Himself for us as a sacrifice, He accomplished a perfect reconciliation for the sins of all people. Through death He destroyed the devil that had the power of death, and delivered them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage, Heb. 2, 14. 15.

The Burial of Jesus. Mark 15, 38—47.

Immediate effects of Christ's death: V. 38. **And the veil of the Temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom.** V. 39. **And when the centurion, which stood over against Him, saw that He so cried out and gave up the ghost, he said, Truly, this Man was the Son of God.** V. 40. **There were also women looking on afar off; among whom was Mary Magdalene, and Mary, the mother of James the Less and of Joses, and Salome;** v. 41. **(who also, when He was in Galilee, followed Him, and ministered unto Him;) and many other women which came up with Him unto Jerusalem.** As a great sign had accompanied Christ's deepest suffering, so nature now signified its horror, at God's command, over the blasphemous deed which had been done on Calvary. While the earth was rocking in quivering terror over the outrage done to the Son of God, the great veil in the Temple, which separated the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place, the room where the altar of incense stood from the room which the high priest entered but once in the year, on the great Day of Atonement, was torn into two parts, from the top to the bottom. That was a sign that sin, which till now had separated man from God, had now been taken away, done away with. No need of earthly mediators and priests to assure the believers of the mercy of God through the blood of calves and of goats, since our great Mediator and High Priest has entered into the most holy place of heaven and has perfected forever them that are sanctified. Every sinner may now, on the strength of Christ's sacrifice, freely come to God and depend upon the full redemption through His blood. The Roman centurion that had charge of the soldiers guarding the cross was a witness of all the things that happened on and near Calvary. But the greatest impression was made upon him by the death of Jesus itself. Here was not a defeat, but a victory, as every one could see. He and those that were with him may often have heard the accounts of the Messiah of the Jews, of the fact that He was to be the Son of God and that He should bring salvation to His people. This occurrence opened his eyes; he now realized and frankly confessed: Truly, this Man was the Son of God. His heart had accepted Jesus as his Savior. At some distance were also standing some of the women that had made it their business to serve the Lord with the ministry of their hands. There was Mary Magdalene, out of whom the Lord had driven seven devils, Mary, the mother of James the Smaller, or Younger, and of Joses, and Salome, the wife of Zebedee, and the mother

of James and John. These women had quietly, but effectively served Jesus even when He was in Galilee, they had made the journey up to Jerusalem with Him, and were now the witnesses of His martyrdom. Note: When the called apostles flee from the Lord's side and hide, for fear of the Jews, the women show the greater courage. Also: It pleases the Lord very well when such ministry is rendered to Him; He has recorded the names of these women to their everlasting honor. Christian women that follow in their footsteps, in all humility, will not lack recognition from Him at the proper time.

The burial of Jesus: V. 42. **And now when the even was come, because it was the preparation, that is, the day before the Sabbath,** v. 43. **Joseph of Arimathea, an honorable councilor, which also waited for the kingdom of God, came, and went in boldly unto Pilate, and craved the body of Jesus.** V. 44. **And Pilate marveled if He were already dead; and calling unto him the centurion, he asked him whether He had been any while dead.** V. 45. **And when he knew it of the centurion, he gave the body to Joseph.** V. 46. **And he bought fine linen, and took Him down, and wrapped Him in the linen, and laid Him in a sepulcher which was hewn out of a rock, and rolled a stone unto the door of the sepulcher.** V. 47. **And Mary Magdalene and Mary, the mother of Joses, beheld where He was laid.** Although this day on which Jesus died, was a great festival day, on which the Jews also offered a second *chagigah*, or offering, combined with a meal, yet the following day, the Sabbath, was considered still more sacred. With reference to that, this Friday was merely the day of preparation. This day, however, was drawing to a close, evening was coming on. If something was to be done toward the burial of the Lord, it must be done at once. And here a new disciple of the Lord is mentioned, who till now had remained under cover. His name was Joseph, and his home town was Arimathea, or Ramah, 1 Sam. 1, 1. 19. He belonged to the great council, or Sanhedrin, of the Jews, but had taken no part in the blasphemous proceedings against Christ. Since help was not forthcoming from any other quarter, this man now threw off all fear and came forth boldly for his Lord. He was even then a believer, and he hoped for the speedy consummation of the kingdom of God, for its revelation before the whole world. Since time was an important factor, he acted accordingly. He dared to go in to Pilate and earnestly beg for the body of Jesus. Pilate was rather surprised that Jesus had died so soon, but after he had received the assurance from the centurion that He had died some time ago, quite a while before this interview, he gladly gave the body to Joseph for burial. Upon this permission Joseph could act. He purchased a fine linen grave-cloth, took down the Lord's body with the aid of another disciple, Nicodemus, wrapped the body in the linen, and laid it in a grave which was hewn out of the stone, in a garden not far from Calvary. They then rolled a heavy stone before the door of the sepulcher, hurrying all the while lest the coming of the Sabbath interrupt their work of love. And during all this time Mary Magdalene and Mary, the mother of Joses, were present, watching carefully where and how their Master was being laid to rest. Thus Jesus, after His shameful death on the cross, still received an honorable burial. It was given Him by disciples that had formerly been too weak to confess their faith. It has often proved the case, in times of persecution and danger, that the weak became strong and the strong weak. Experienced Christians have deeply disappointed expectations, while others that were still weak in knowledge stood their ground firmly. And for us there is consolation also in the fact that Christ was laid into a grave. That fact has hallowed our graves. We need fear neither death nor the grave. Those that fall asleep in Christ rest peacefully in their beds in the earth until the great day of the eternal Easter dawns.

Summary. *Jesus is brought to Pilate for trial, who unjustly condemns Him to death on the cross, after having vainly tried to release Him; He is mocked by the soldiers, led out to Golgotha, crucified between two criminals, reviled by the people, suffers the agony of hell, yields up His spirit to His Father, and is buried under the direction of Joseph of Arimathea.*

CHAPTER 16.

The Resurrection of Jesus. Mark 16, 1—8.

The women at the sepulcher: V. 1. **And when the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, and Mary, the mother of James, and Salome, had bought sweet spices, that they might come and anoint Him.** V. 2. **And very early in the morning, the first day of the week, they came unto the sepulcher at the rising of the sun.** V. 3. **And they said among themselves, Who shall roll us away the stone from the door of the sepulcher?** V. 4. **And when they looked, they saw that the stone was rolled away; for it was very great.** The weekly Sabbath came to a close at sunset, whereupon the bazaars were quickly thrown open to take advantage of any trade that might happen along before complete darkness set in. The same women that had been present on Calvary, two of whom had been witnesses of Christ's burial,

Mary Magdalene, Mary, the mother of James, and Salome, the wife of Zebedee, had, even on Friday evening, prepared such ointments and spices as they could find before the Sabbath was announced. They now made further purchases of sweet-smelling spices, in order to have everything ready against the morrow, for they intended to go out to the grave and anoint the body of their Master properly. Note: Here is a bit of evidence that there was no idea or intention in the minds of the disciples to steal the body of Jesus and falsely to allege that He had risen from the dead. The prophecies of Christ concerning this event had apparently been entirely forgotten for the time being. So early did the women start out from the city on the next morning, on the first of the Sabbath-days, the great day of the festival when the sheaves were offered to God in the Temple, that they arrived at the grave when the sun was rising. They seem to have had no knowledge of the presence of the soldiers or else not to have anticipated any difficulty on their account. But one fact was worrying them all the way out to the garden, and they spoke of it again and again — the matter of the stone that had been rolled before the door of the sepulcher. It had taken at least two men to put it into place, and there was little chance of their removing it with their combined strength, for it was very great. "Rock-cut tombs, whether large or small, were regarded as important possessions. . . . To close a 'doorway' tomb securely must always have been a matter of difficulty in Palestine. It was not easy with the kind of locks they had to keep intruders out of tombs. This led to the cutting of a large groove by the side of the doorway into which a rolling-stone was fitted. When it was desired to open the tomb, the stone could be rolled back. The stones were too heavy to be easily disturbed. It was in a new tomb of this type that the body of Jesus was laid, and it was such a stone that the women found rolled away on the resurrection morning." 56) This was the first thing that the women looked for when they came in sight of the tomb, for by this time they could distinguish objects clearly. And the fact that the stone was rolled away from the tomb may have filled them with great fear and consternation, causing them to think, perhaps, of grave robbers. Mary Magdalene, at least, waited for nothing more, but turned at once and brought this version of the happening to the city, John 20, 1. 2. 15.

The message of the risen Lord: V. 5. **And entering into the sepulcher, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, clothed in a long white garment; and they were affrighted. V. 6. And he saith unto them, Be not affrighted: Ye seek Jesus of Nazareth, which was crucified; He is risen; He is not here; behold the place where they laid Him. V. 7. But go your way, tell His disciples and Peter that He goeth before you into Galilee; there shall ye see Him, as He said unto you. V. 8. And they went out quickly, and fled from the sepulcher; for they trembled and were amazed; neither said they anything to any man, for they were afraid.** While Mary Magdalene was hurrying back to the city, the other Mary and Salome, impelled by interested curiosity, went into the tomb through the open door. But here they received a great surprise, for they saw what appeared to them a young man clothed in a long white garment sitting on the right hand side. The presence of various angels on this Easter morning, at various times and in various positions, need not cause surprise. There must have been multitudes of them present, though only a few of them or a single one may have been visible at any one time, such as had been specially delegated, as at the birth of Christ, to bring the Lord's message. But the appearance of this angel in the tomb greatly terrified the women. The reflection of the glorious light of heaven shone from the messenger's face and garment, and poor, sinful human beings cannot endure that splendor without flinching and becoming terrified. But the angel's message was intended to allay all fear: Be not terrified! As at the birth of the Savior the first words of the heavenly preacher were: Fear not, so the cheering cry went out at this time. The poor weak heart is inclined always to tremble, feeling the weight and the guilt of its sin. But there is no longer need of such trembling, there is no longer reason for fearing, since full and certain redemption lies before all men in the empty grave. The angel speaks of the Lord by the name which had been given Him to heap shame and reproach upon Him. But Jesus of Nazareth is now the name of which He Himself and all His followers are justly proud. As Jesus of Nazareth He hung on the cross, but as Jesus of Nazareth He also rose from the dead. The place where He lay is still there, the evidences of His having been buried are still to be seen; but He is risen from the dead. Mark the short, vivid method of speaking: He is risen, not is He here; see the place where they laid Him. All is joyful emotion, exultation which struggles for utterance. And the message is not for them alone, the kingdom of God cannot wait, there is work to be done in His interest, the news must be spread. They should tell His disciples and Peter the glorious tidings. And Peter: a direct mention of his name; Peter that had fallen so deeply, but who, as the Lord knew, had deeply repented of his sin; Peter who felt himself so utterly unworthy at this time, but who would yet feel the forgiving love of his resurrected Lord. As Jesus had told them, chapter 14, 28, He was now preparing to go, to precede them into Galilee; for there, at a place

56) Barton, *Archeology and the Bible*, 183. 184.

which He had designated to them, He wanted to speak to them. The effect of the angel's appearance and message upon the two women was overwhelming; the event was too much for them. They left the tomb, they fled away from the scene of such miracles; trembling and stupor, a kind of ecstasy bordering on hysteria, had taken hold of them. So great was their fear on that morning that for the present they said nothing to any one. After their fears had been somewhat allayed, after they had heard that others had also received revelations independent of their testimony, they no longer were quiet about the wonderful things they had seen and heard at the tomb.

The Appearances and the Ascension of Jesus. Mark 16, 9—20.[57])

The appearance to Mary Magdalene: V. 9. **Now when Jesus was risen early the first day of the week, He appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom He had cast seven devils.** V. 10. **And she went and told them that had been with Him as they mourned and wept.** V. 11. **And they, when they had heard that He was alive, and had been seen of her, believed not.** Just how highly Jesus thought of the women that had served Him so faithfully, especially during the last year and the closing weeks of His life, is evident from the fact that He appeared to one of these, to Mary Magdalene, first. The evangelist is here evidently summarizing the events of the forty days after the resurrection of Christ in his characteristically brief manner. He therefore does not give a full account of this meeting with Christ, as John did, 20, 14—18, but enumerates this appearance as one of many. And for the sake of the readers that were looking for distinguishing marks, he identifies Mary Magdalene as the woman out of whom Christ had driven seven devils. No sooner had Mary received this evidence of the Lord's resurrection than she hurried to tell it, not only to the apostles, but to all the disciples that were at Jerusalem, who were now in bitter grief over their great loss. So deeply had the Passion and death of their Master affected these people that they simply refused to believe this eye-witness. Their hearts had not yet risen to an understanding of the prophecies of Christ concerning His resurrection, as often as He had tried to impress this fact upon their minds. Another bit of evidence against the theory of the Lord's stolen body.

The appearance to the Emmaus disciples: V. 12. **After that He appeared in another form unto two of them as they walked and went into the country.** V. 13. **And they went and told it unto the residue; neither believed they them.** This is undoubtedly a summary of the afternoon's events, as related by Luke, 24, 13—35. In a different form He came to them on the way, as these two were on their way to Emmaus, in an unusual dress or bearing, as is evident from Luke's remark that their eyes were holden. This second appearance should have convinced all of the disciples, not merely the apostles, though, for that matter, there were some that doubted even among them. But even now most of the rest, of the disciples at large, believed them not. That was the situation on the evening of Easter Day, in spite of an appearance to Peter that took place some time in the course of the day, and in spite of the joyful call of those that had gained the conviction of His having risen.

The appearance to the eleven: V. 14. **Afterward He appeared unto the Eleven as they sat at meat, and upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart because they believed not them which had seen Him after He was risen.** V. 15. **And He said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature.** V. 16. **He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.** V. 17. **And these signs shall follow them that believe: In My name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues;** v. 18. **they shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.** A still later revelation of Christ toward the end of the forty days. The evangelist is so brief in contracting his account that it is difficult to fix the exact time for every act and every word. It may also be assumed, without question, that the Lord spoke many more things to His disciples at the various appearances, of which we know nothing. In this case, He appeared while they were reclining, probably at a meal. At that time He spoke to them in a very serious manner, rebuking and chiding them very earnestly on account of their refusal to believe, which resulted from the hardness of their heart, when the message of His resurrection had been brought to them by such as had actually seen Him after He had risen. For all these accounts of credible witnesses, coming after the thorough instruction which He

---

57) There can be no reasonable doubt as to the authenticity of the last passage in Mark, vv. 9—20. The gospel surely did not end with v. 8. Being the end of the parchment roll, this passage may have been mutilated in many manuscripts. But though it is missing in many of the ancient manuscripts, it is found in the Freer (Washington) Manuscript, with an addition to v. 14 (Cobern, *The New Archeological Discoveries*, 164. 583. 194). The style shows the concise, vivid narrative of Mark. Many terms, to the careful reader at least, show the influence of Peter. The simplest and most comprehensive summaries on the question are those of Fuerbringer, *Einleitung in das Neue Testament*, 27—29, and Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, Vol. I.

had given them on their private excursions, should have filled them with the most confident faith as to the fact of His resurrection. And here they had been hidden away in mortal fear of their lives, showing about as much trust in the almighty Lord as the average Christian when he is attacked by the unbelievers and seems in danger of persecution. "There was a faith and yet no faith; for they did not yet believe all, though they believed that God made heaven and earth and was the Creator of all. Therefore faith is a thing which always grows. The apostles, then, were not altogether without faith, for they had a piece of faith. It is with faith as with a person that has been sick and is on the way to recovery. Therefore the Lord states wherein they did not believe and what they still lacked; for that was the matter that they did not believe Christ's resurrection from the dead. Though they believed the other, yet this thing they lacked. For I presume they believed also that they had a gracious God; but that was not enough, since it was necessary also to believe the resurrection of Christ from the dead. For this reason the Lord chides them for their unbelief, rebukes them and says: Though they had seen everything, yet they did not believe, since this article of the resurrection was missing." 58)

Still He gave them His great commission. Going out into all the world, they should preach the Gospel to every creature. It is a most comprehensive command, it knows no limit. The Gospel, the message of salvation through the meritorious work, through the bitter suffering of Jesus, the Savior of the whole world, is the only proclamation that has any authority and right in Christian pulpits. All other topics are outside of the pale. Every sermon must serve in building the Church of Jesus Christ. For the test is faith in that Gospel and in nothing else. There may be ever so many creeds and cults in the world to-day, with philosophical systems and schemes for the social amelioration of mankind. Many of these may even have their value for effecting more wholesome conditions and improving the tone of a community. But they all are trash and worse than trash when it comes to the critical question: What must I do to be saved? For this there is only one answer: He that believes and is baptized shall be saved. Faith in Jesus Christ through the medium of the Gospel and a further confirming and accepting of the great benefits of Christ's salvation through the water of salvation, through Baptism, that is the only way to become sure of heaven and its bliss. The former is conceded by most people that profess adherence to the Bible and its truths, but the latter fact, salvation through the Sacrament of Baptism, is denied by many upon so-called reasonable grounds. "But there thou seest no work of men; for Baptism is not mine, but God's work. For he that baptizes me stands there in the stead of God, and does not perform a human work, but it is God's hand and work. Therefore I may and shall say thus: God, my Lord, has baptized me Himself by the hand of a man; of this I may boast and may depend upon it and say: God, who will not and cannot lie, has given me that sign, that I may be certain of His grace and that He wants to save me, having given me all that He has, through His Son. Thus there is on our side nothing but faith, and on His side only the Word and the sign." 59) Through this faith and in this Sacrament God actually gives salvation, assures us of the certainty of the heritage of heaven which is reserved for us. "That is indeed pleasant, friendly, consoling preaching, and is fitly called Gospel. For here hearest thou with one word: He shall be saved, heaven opened, hell closed, the Law and the sentence of God annulled, sin and death buried, and life and salvation placed into the bosom of the whole world, if they would but believe it. O that every one could learn well but these two words — 'believe' and 'be saved'! For though they are short and have few letters, yet they are such preaching and power as the world cannot comprehend, that such excellent grace and unspeakable treasure is given through preaching, altogether without our merit, for which we have done nothing, yea, knew nothing thereof." 60) But the other side of the question cannot be passed over in silence, for Christ's words are very impressive. Where there is no faith in the salvation of Jesus, damnation is sure to follow. "As the former sentence in one word opens heaven, closes hell, annuls Moses and the terrors of the Law for all that believe: so this part is a strong sentence and in turn with one word closes heaven, opens hell wide, makes Moses with his Law an unendurable tyrant and the devil a mighty lord to all that do not believe. Nothing will help against it; though thou shouldest be zealous to death for the Law, as the Jews were or Paul before his conversion; though thou become a monk or a nun; though thou permit thyself to be tortured and burned, yet shall the verdict be: If thou believest not in Christ, thou must go into the fire of hell, be eternally damned, and death will be an eternal, almighty dungeon over thee." 61)

It was a responsible commission which the Lord entrusted to His disciples. And therefore He cheers and strengthens them by the assurance of special signs, miracles, or powers, with which He will accompany their work: In His name to cast out devils; to speak with new, that is, unknown languages; to pick up serpents without danger to themselves; to drink poison which might be offered to them to kill them, with no evil effects; to lay their hands

58) Luther, 11, 946.

59) Luther, 11, 939.

60) Luther, 11, 967.

61) Luther, 13b, 2034.

upon invalids of all kinds and restore them to health. All these miraculous things actually did take place in the history of the Church. During the early days it was especially necessary that the power of God in the apostles and all Christians be evidenced in such a manner; but the power of God is just as mighty to-day as ever, and there are thousands of miracles being done in His name wherever the Gospel is being proclaimed. "Thus even in our days and always such great signs and wonders upon wonders are being performed in this, that any city or any small body or assembly of Christians still remains in true knowledge of God and in faith; since there are more than a hundred thousand devils directed against her, and the world is full of sects and scoundrels and tyrants; yet the Gospel, Baptism, Eucharist, confession of Christ is retained without their thanks, to make it evident that for the heathen He must have given external signs which people could see before their eyes and grasp them. But the Christians must have much higher heavenly signs than those earthly ones. . . . Therefore we should indeed praise and glorify the great and glorious, wonderful deeds which Christ does daily in Christendom, that they conquer the devil's might and power and tear so many souls out of the mouth of death and hell. . . . Where a heart, therefore, in spite of the terror of death and sin and hell, cheerfully dies in the faith in Christ, there he is truly cast out of his seat and dwelling, and his power and kingdom is weakened and taken from him." 62) The warning which Luther adds in one of his sermons on this text concerning false miracles and such as are done without God's sanction, often with the aid of powers which have nothing in common with Him, is very timely even to-day. Even if it were possible for a person to perform deeds that had all the external marks of true miracles, the promise and command of God is not there. The Gospel and the Sacraments are the means by which the Christian Church is to carry forward the work of the Savior till the end of time.

The ascension of Christ: V. 19. **So, then, after the Lord had spoken unto them, He was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God.** V. 20. **And they went forth and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and confirming the Word with signs following. Amen.** At the end of the time which He had set for Himself, forty days after His resurrection, after He had given His disciples all the instructions which they needed for their work, He was taken up into heaven, He ascended into the glory of the heavens, and He sat down at the right hand of God, He now, according to His human nature, as our brother according to the flesh, occupies the place at God's right hand. He has full dominion over all creatures in heaven and earth and under the earth. With this assurance the disciples went forth. They preached the Gospel everywhere, in all places, throughout the world that was then known. And Christ worked with them; they did not stand alone, but had Him at their side always, in their entire ministry. And wherever a confirmation of the Gospel was necessary in the form of some external sign, such miracle was forthcoming, according to His promise. Christ's presence is with those that preach the pure Gospel to-day as surely as it ever was. If our faith but trust in Him, the great Champion of His Church, who works in and with us, and therefore in and with the Gospel, then the great miracles which He has always performed through His Word will be done to-day as they ever were: Hearts polluted beyond all resemblance to human hearts will be made whiter than snow; souls that were lost and sold into the power of the devil will be redeemed and be given the liberty of the children of God; people whose entire nature is sick with the fearful disease of sin will be made whole and strong to fight the Lord's battles, all through the power of the Gospel. And the Lord's hand has not waxed short with reference to other miracles, which are fully obvious to all that have open eyes.

Summary. *The resurrection of Jesus is announced to the women by an angel; Christ appears to several persons and finally to the apostles, to whom He gives the great missionary command, assuring them, incidentally, of His cooperation and support in the preaching of the Gospel until the end of time.*

62) Luther, 11, 990.

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO SAINT LUKE.

INTRODUCTION.

There is no reason to doubt the tradition transmitted by the church historian Eusebius that the third gospel was written by Luke. This evangelist, whom Paul calls the "beloved physician," Col. 4, 14, was a heathen by birth, Col. 4, 11, who was born and grew up in Antioch, Acts 6, 5; 11, 19—28. There are many evidences of his profession in the gospel as well as in the Acts, Luke 4, 38; 5, 12; 6, 6; 7, 2; 8, 42; 10, 30—37; 16, 20—22; Acts 28, 8. He had received a good education and wrote in an easy, flowing, elegant style, a fact which gives his books a high rank also as literature. Luke had not known Jesus personally, but seems to have been converted in Antioch, probably by Paul, with whom he was connected in a life-

long, intimate friendship. The great apostle esteemed him very highly as a companion and assistant, Col. 4, 14; Philemon 24; 2 Tim. 4, 11. On Paul's second journey, Luke joined him at Troas and accompanied him to Philippi, Acts 16, 10—17. On the third journey, Luke was again among the companions of Paul, going with him from Philippi to Jerusalem, Acts 20, 5—21, 18. Afterwards, Luke made the voyage from Caesarea to Rome with Paul, the captive, and was with him in Rome, Acts 27, 1—28, 16. During the second captivity Luke was again with Paul, for which the apostle was duly thankful, 2 Tim. 4, 11. Outside of these facts nothing is known concerning Luke, either of the circumstances of his life or of the time and manner of his death.

Luke was a historian of the first order, to whom even unbelieving critics yield a high rank as regards trustworthiness. This is evident even in his gospel, chapter 1, 1—4. According to the testimony of early writers, Luke was, in a way, the interpreter of Paul, as Mark was of Peter. His writings plainly show that influence, especially in the expressions concerning the justification of a sinner before God, Luke 18, 14; Acts 13, 38. 39. The Gospel is dedicated to the "most excellent Theophilus," who evidently was a man of high station, not a former Jew, but a Gentile who lived in Italy. There are indications throughout the gospel that Luke wrote for a public ignorant of Palestine, its customs, and its language, but familiar with the surroundings of Greek and Roman life in the great cities of the empire, chapter 5, 17—20. He explains to his readers Semitic names and terms; he describes the situations of Nazareth and Capernaum as cities of Galilee, of Arimathea as a city of the Jews, of the country of the Gadarenes as over against Galilee, and he even tells the distance of the Mount of Olives and of Emmaus from Jerusalem. That Luke had Gentile Christians in mind is evident also from the fact that he does not emphasize the Messianic character of Jesus, as Matthew does, but that he emphasizes the fact that Jesus is the Savior of the whole world, the Redeemer also of the Gentiles, Luke 2, 10. 31. 32, and that the Gospel should be preached to all nations. He pictures Jesus as the Friend of the poor and needy, both in a spiritual and in a physical sense, chapter 1, 52. 53; 2, 7. 8; 4, 18. 19; 6, 20; 12, 15—21; 16, 19—31. Luther says: "Luke goes back farther and purposes, as it were, to make Christ the common property of all nations. For that reason he carries His genealogy back to Adam. In this way he wishes to show that this Christ is not only for the Jews, but also for Adam and his posterity, that is, for all people in all the world." 1)

In accordance with the purpose of the gospel, there are several distinguishing features which should be noted, especially the accuracy of the medical descriptions, the preservation of the inspired hymns (those of the angels at the birth of Jesus, that of Elizabeth, of Mary, of Zacharias), and the prominence given to women, 8, 2. 3; 10, 38—42; 23, 27. 28.

The gospel of Luke was surely written before the year 70 A. D., since there is no reference to the destruction of Jerusalem, concerning which the author gives the complete prophecy of Jesus, chapter 21. From the introduction of the book it has been inferred that Luke wrote after Matthew and Mark, that is, about 67 or 68. Some commentators have assumed that Luke returned to Antioch about this time and wrote his gospel there, but the common assumption is that it was written in Italy, and in Rome, Acts 28, 16. 30. 31; Col. 4, 14; Philemon 24; 2 Tim. 4, 11.

The outline of Luke's gospel is, in general, that of the other synoptic gospels. His introduction concerning the forerunner of Christ and the birth and childhood of Jesus is divided into three sections, marked off by starting-points in secular history. He next gives a full account of the prophetic ministry of Christ in Galilee. Then comes a full account of the parables and discourses which were called forth by the necessity of teaching Christ's disciples and of reproving the Pharisaic enemies. Finally Luke narrates the story of Christ's last journey to Jerusalem and of His sufferings, death, resurrection, and ascension. 2)

1) Luther, 7, 6.

2) Fuerbringer, *Einleitung in das Neue Testament*, 29—32.

CHAPTER 1.

The Preface to the Gospel. Luke 1, 1—4.

V. 1. Forasmuch as many have taken in hand to set forth in order a declaration of those things which are most surely believed among us, v. 2. even as they delivered them unto us, which from the beginning were eye-witnesses and ministers of the Word, v. 3. it seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write unto thee, in order, most excellent Theophilus, v. 4. that thou mightest know the certainty of those things wherein thou hast been instructed. Inasmuch as, since, seeing as is well known: the strong particle implies that the fact which the evangelist is about to state is well known, that it is important, and that it introduces the reason why Luke enters upon his great undertaking. Many persons had taken into their own hand to set forth in a connected narrative the great things that had been fulfilled, brought to their full consumma-

tion in their midst in the fulness of time. The Gospel-account had been transmitted in the form of episodes and individual stories, not in a long connected narrative. And there were many that wished a connected story concerning the events which now lay before the Christians as a complete whole. But many of these went ahead on their own initiative, and the word used by Luke implies a slight censure. They acted without authority of the great teachers of the Church, using their own judgment as to the authenticity of the stories that were circulating. Their efforts were on a par with those of the later apocryphal writers, a mixture of truth and falsehood. But the things that form the subject of Christian belief should not be left to scribes that wrote and edited without authority, without the certainty of full and divine truth. The disciples had been the witnesses of Christ's ministry, they had seen and heard the miracles and the sermons from the beginning, they had been ministers with Christ, assisting Him in His great work. They had been servants of the Word. The Gospel-story and its application engrossed their attention, that word summed up and characterized their labors. What they had taught had been the divine truth, since the Holy Spirit had led them into all truth. Their actual report of the Gospel-story and of the Gospel-preaching should be the only one to have validity among Christians. That is the notion which Luke had concerning the matter. Therefore he had made careful inquiries, he had very diligently followed up the matter from the very beginning, he had informed himself in all things with the aid of the responsible, authoritative teachers. He was therefore ready, on the basis of such investigations and studies, to write a continuous story, a connected narrative, of the entire Gospel-history, not only from the beginning of Christ's ministry, but from the beginning of His life. Luke then politely addresses the man for whom his summarized investigations were primarily intended, namely, one Theophilus, probably a Roman, whom he calls honorable, and who may therefore have occupied a high official position. This man had already received catechetical instruction (the first case in which such instruction is implied), but he had not made great advances in religious knowledge outside of the fundamentals, probably for lack of an authoritative text-book. But Luke wants him to know well, to understand exactly and fully, the certainty of the truth which he has learned up to the present time; he should be established in knowledge. It was for that reason that the writing or editing of a chronological and logical history of the life and ministry of Jesus was so desirable. Note: The explanation which Luke here gives does not in any way weaken verbal inspiration. "Though God gives His Holy Spirit to all them who ask Him, yet this gift was never designed to set aside the use of those faculties with which He has already endued the soul, and which are as truly His gifts as the Holy Spirit itself is. The nature of inspiration, in the case of St. Luke, we at once discover: he set himself, by impartial inquiry and diligent investigation, to find the whole truth, and to relate nothing but the truth; and the Spirit of God presided over and directed his inquiries, so that he discovered the whole truth, and was preserved from every particle of error." 3) Mark also: "This preface gives a lively picture of the intense, universal interest felt by the early Church in the story of the Lord Jesus: Apostles constantly telling what they had seen and heard; many of their hearers taking notes of what they said for the benefit of themselves and others; through these gospelets acquaintance with the evangelic history circulating among believers, creating a thirst for more and yet more; imposing on such a man as Luke the task of preparing a gospel as full, correct, and well arranged as possible through the use of all available means — previous writing or oral testimony of surviving eye-witnesses." 4) It may be remarked, finally, that this preface of Luke's gospel is not only a splendid example of Greek writing, but also breathes the spirit of true meekness, such as should characterize not only the minister of the Gospel, but every Christian.

The Announcement of John the Baptist's Birth. Luke 1, 5—25.

The parents of John: V. 5. **There was in the days of Herod, the king of Judea, a certain priest named Zacharias, of the course of Abia; and his wife was of the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elisabeth.** V. 6. **And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless.** V. 7. **And they had no child, because that Elisabeth was barren, and they both were now well stricken in years.** There was or lived in the days when Herod the Great was king of Judea. Luke is very careful and exact in all his references to secular history, and therefore his statements are so generally trustworthy, aside from the fact that they are inspired by God. It was then that a priest by the name of Zacharias (which Luther renders proclamation, remembrance of the Lord) was living in Judea, in one of the cities set aside for the use of the priests. He belonged to the order, class, or division of Abia. All the priests of the Jews, numbering about 20,000 at the time of Christ, were divided into certain sections, named according to their week's service. These classes or orders followed each other in due rotation for the Temple-service in Jerusalem. There were twenty-four classes, of which that of Abia was the eighth, 1 Chron. 24. The wife of Zacharias was also of

3) Clarke, *Commentary*, 5, 355.
4) *Expositor's Greek Testament*, 1, 460.

the descendants of Aaron, the daughter of a priest. Her name was Elisabeth, which Luther explains as God's rest, or ceasing from work, a rest given by God. John the Baptist was thus descended from priestly parents on both sides.

Zacharias and Elisabeth are given the highest praise by the evangelist. Righteous they both were before God, their manner of living was of a nature to stand the scrutiny of God, they were models of civic righteousness. They walked in all the commandments and statutes of the Lord without reproach. From the standpoint of human judgment their piety and goodness was blameless. But in spite of all this there was one great sorrow that burdened their lives. No child had been given them to brighten their home, and childlessness, from the Jewish and Biblical point of view, was a calamity. And this was not a matter of their own choice or wish, but it happened so, inasmuch as Elisabeth was barren. The Lord had denied her the privilege of motherhood. And at this time they were both far advanced in age, beyond the days when, according to the course of nature, they might expect the blessing of children. They felt this childlessness as a deep reproach, as a heavy cross. "For the barren were considered cursed people. For Genesis 1, when God created them male and female, He said: 'Be fruitful and multiply!' These words the Jews diligently urged. He that had no issue was not blessed. Therefore a man or woman without children must be cursed and unblessed. Thus Elisabeth might also have complained that she was rejected and mocked by the world, since she was barren. Now people consider it a blessing when they have no children," 5) — more's the pity!

Zacharias in the Temple: V. 8. **And it came to pass that, while he executed the priest's office before God in the order of his course,** v. 9. **according to the custom of the priest's office, his lot was to burn incense when he went into the Temple of the Lord.** V. 10. **And the whole multitude of the people were praying without at the time of incense.** It so happened, or rather it came about by God's dispensation and government, that Zacharias was serving in his priestly office. In the course of time, as it happened twice a year in the Jewish calendar, his order or division was on duty in the Temple of the Lord. So he left his home and went to Jerusalem for the week's duties with the other priests of his course. It was the custom of the Jews to designate the various labors which the priests had to perform in the Temple by casting lots, some of them being selected to take care of the altar of burnt offerings, others to the appointments of the Holy Place, others to the vessels in the priests' court. In this way it fell to the lot of Zacharias on a certain day to perform the very special service of burning incense on the golden altar in the Holy Place. This was a memorable day in the life of any priest, since the chance might never come to him but once. This work was performed in the Temple proper, as Luke remarks for the sake of such as were not familiar with the Jewish form of worship and the various offerings in the services. The officiating priest, during this part of the ceremony, was in the Holy Place all alone, all the attendants and assistants having withdrawn. The congregation, during this ceremony, was assembled out in the courts, for this was the hour of prayer, about nine o'clock in the morning, and the offering of incense was a type and symbol of the prayers arising to the throne of God, Ps. 141, 2.

The angel messenger: V. 11. **And there appeared unto him an angel of the Lord standing on the right side of the altar of incense.** V. 12. **And when Zacharias saw him, he was troubled, and fear fell upon him.** V. 13. **But the angel said unto him, Fear not, Zacharias; for thy prayer is heard, and thy wife Elisabeth shall bear thee a son; and thou shalt call his name John.** V. 14. **And thou shalt have joy and gladness; and many shall rejoice at his birth.** V. 15. **For he shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink; and he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb.** V. 16. **And many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord, their God.** V. 17. **And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.** While Zacharias was engaged in the work of his ministry, while the fumes of the incense in the censer were being wafted upward before the veil of the Most Holy Place, there suddenly appeared to him an angel of the Lord. It was not a revelation in a dream or in an unconscious state, but an actual appearance, about whose definiteness there could be no doubt. On the right side, that is, on the south side of the altar of incense, the heavenly visitor stood. Zacharias was not in an ecstatic state, his mind was perfectly clear, he noted every detail. But he was deeply moved at the sight, greatly perturbed, as might be expected under the circumstances. And this perturbation took the form of fear, which fell upon him. Well might a sinful man be filled with fear in the presence of a sinless messenger from the holy God. But the angel made haste to reassure him, to tell him there was no need of fear and disturbance. It is a message of joy that he is bringing. It was not only on this day that the thoughts of Zacharias in his prayer had dwelt upon the cross that he was bearing, but it seems that this calamity was a cause of constant supplication to God. Note: When God gives His children a cross to bear, He tests

5) Luther, 7, 1506.

their fortitude and patience, their faith and trust in Him. Even if all experience of man is against a Christian in his prayer, he trusts in the merciful Father for help and, in child-like faith, brings his petition before the throne of God again and again. God will hear at His time and in His way. Thus the angel here announced to Zacharias the fulfilment of his prayer. His wife Elisabeth would bear him a son, and he should call the name of this son John, which Luther renders: the Lord's favor or mercy. This happening, the angel says, will be the occasion for joy and exultation on the part of the father. But other people also would rejoice with the parents on account of this son. The angel does not merely mean the relatives, who, indeed, did not disappoint them at the time appointed, but there is here a hint also of the joy which the true Jews, the believers, would feel at this indication of the consummation of their hopes, for some surely would recognize in John the forerunner of the Lord, the Messiah. The cause for this joy in the highest degree will not merely be parenthood realized, but the fact that this son would be great before the Lord, in the sight of God. He shall be esteemed highly in the sight of God, but shall also receive such regard for service in the field of religion. One of his characteristics would be that of the Nazarites of old: he would drink neither wine nor strong drink, any intoxicating beverage made from fruit outside of grapes, Num. 6, 3. But his greatest distinction would be this, that he would be filled with the Holy Ghost, not only from the hour of his birth, but before he would have seen the light, from his earliest origin. And a great and wonderful work will be his: Many of the children of Israel will he turn, convert, to the Lord, their God. Repentance and conversion will be his great aim and watchword. Such a spiritual renewal or revival was badly needed in Palestine at this time, since there was too much dead orthodoxy and not enough living faith among the people. In performing this work, John would be fulfilling the prophecy spoken of him, Mal. 4, 5. 6. The spirit and power of Elijah would be living in him, to turn the heart of the parents to the children, to make them realize the responsibility that rests upon them in the bringing up of the little ones in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, to make them realize that a supplying of the physical needs of the children is not sufficient to meet the demands of the Lord, to make them understand that their duty is not fulfilled when they go through the perfunctory, prescribed formula for teaching their children the outward observances of religion. And incidentally, John's work would consist in turning the disobedient, the faithless, in, or by means of, the sound common sense of the righteous. To wander away from the Lord and follow the bent and inclination of one's own evil heart, is, in the last analysis, the height of foolishness. The only true common sense is that found in those that live their life, with God's help, in accordance with the rules of God's holy Word. By such means, and in this way, John would prepare for the Lord a ready, instructed, adapted people. That is the order in the kingdom of Christ: by the preaching of repentance the way is prepared for Christ and for the Gospel of the mercy of God in Christ. Only where the hearts are previously influenced properly by such preaching, can sound Christian character grow out of the love of Christ.

The doubts of Zacharias: V. 18. **And Zacharias said unto the angel, Whereby shall I know this? For I am an old man, and my wife well stricken in years.** V. 19. **And the angel, answering, said unto him, I am Gabriel, that stand in the presence of God, and am sent to speak unto thee, and to show thee these glad tidings.** V. 20. **And, behold, thou shalt be dumb, and not able to speak, until the day that these things shall be performed, because thou believest not my words, which shall be fulfilled in their season.** The announcement of the angel and the enthusiasm with which he delivered his message overwhelmed the aged priest. Hoping against hope, he had continued his importunate appeals for progeny even beyond the usual term of life. But now that his prayers were to be answered beyond his fondest expectations, the greatness of the miracle created doubt in his mind. It suddenly seemed too good to be true, the course of nature could not be set aside; and therefore he labored under a lack of faith. He asks: By what means shall I know this? He wanted some concrete evidence, some definite sign which would give him the immediate assurance of the realization of his hopes. For now that his faith had been shaken, he argues from the standpoint of human reason, that he himself was an old man and that his wife was far advanced in her days, that the predicted event could therefore not well take place. Zacharias received the sign he asked for more quickly than he had anticipated. With solemn impressiveness the angel explains to him the reason why his message should have been believed implicitly. For Gabriel was his name, which means the might of the strong God. Zacharias, being familiar with the books of the prophets, would understand the name and all it stood for, Dan. 8, 16; 9, 21. Gabriel belonged to the blessed angels that stand in the presence of God, that are confirmed in eternal bliss before the throne of God. He was present, not on his own initiative or in his own interest, but as the messenger of the strong God, who could accomplish every purpose and subdue all things to Himself. He had come to bring to Zacharias truly good, joyful tidings. Since, therefore, Zacharias, without considering this fact, had chosen to doubt the message, the sign that he required would be in the nature of a severe, though temporal and temporary punishment:

total dumbness, until the time that all this would come to pass, for, as the angel once more emphasizes, the matter foretold would surely be fulfilled in its season, at the time appointed by God.

The anxiety of the people: V. 21. **And the people waited for Zacharias, and marveled that he tarried so long in the Temple.** V. 22. **And when he came out, he could not speak unto them; and they perceived that he had seen a vision in the Temple; for he beckoned unto them, and remained speechless.** V. 23. **And it came to pass that, as soon as the days of his ministration were accomplished, he departed to his own house.** The offering of incense was the culmination of the morning service, during which Zacharias was in the Holy Place all alone. The people were always apprehensive of some disaster that might befall the officiating priest, that God might slay him as unworthy and then visit His wrath upon the entire people; therefore they worried about him. The conversation with the angel had prolonged the priest's stay far beyond the usual hour of closing, and their uneasy wonder about the delay was increasing. When he finally emerged from the Holy Place and stepped into the open space of the priests' court, near the steps which led down to the other courts, he could not speak to the people, he could not pronounce the Aaronic blessing, which concluded the morning service. Zacharias had received proof positive that the credentials of Gabriel were beyond question; dumbness had at once fallen upon him. But by his gestures and signs the people sensed or perceived, understood that something unusual had occurred in the Temple, they inferred that he had seen a vision of some kind which had rendered him speechless. But though Zacharias had been deprived of the power of speech, he served the full course of his Temple ministry, he stayed for the full week, 2 Kings 11, 17. There were other services that did not demand the use of the voice, and many ministrations in the Temple were given over to such as had minor physical defects. But at the end of the week he returned to his house, to the city of the priests where he had his home. The words of one commentator referring to the work of the pastors in this connection may well be extended to include all Christians, inasmuch as they all should be engaged in the work of the Master. He writes: "There is something very instructive in the conduct of this priest; had he not loved the service he was engaged in, he might have made the loss of his speech a pretext for immediately quitting it. But as he was not thereby disabled from fulfilling the sacerdotal function, so he saw he was bound to continue till his ministry was ended, or till God had given him a positive dismissal. Preachers who give up their labor in the vineyard because of some trifling bodily disorder by which they are afflicted, or through some inconvenience in outward circumstances which the follower of a cross-bearing, crucified Lord should not mention, show either that they never had a proper concern for the honor of their Master or for the salvation of men, or else that they have lost the spirit of their Master and the spirit of their work. Again, Zacharias did not hasten to his house to tell his wife the good news that he had received from heaven, in which she was certainly very much interested: the angel had promised that all his words should be fulfilled in their season, and for this season he patiently waited in the path of duty. He had engaged in the work of the Lord, and must pay no attention to anything that was likely to mar or interrupt his religious service. Preachers who profess to be called of God to labor in the Word and doctrine and who abandon their work for filthy lucre's sake are the most contemptible of mortals and traitors to their God." 6)

The beginning of the fulfilment: V. 24. **And after those days his wife Elisabeth conceived, and hid herself five months, saying,** v. 25. **Thus hath the Lord dealt with me in the days wherein He looked on me, to take away my reproach among men.** In His season God remembered Elisabeth and her husband. The aged wife had evidence that her prayers at last seemed about to be heard. The result of this knowledge was that she hid herself entirely, she took no part in any social intercourse. God had taken care to remove her reproach from her. Since fruitfulness was one of the promises of God to His people, Gen. 17, 6, and since children, on this account, were considered as a particular blessing from heaven, Ex. 23, 26; Lev. 26, 9; Ps. 127, 3, barrenness was among the Jews considered a reproach, a token of the disapprobation of the Lord, 1 Sam. 1, 6. This stigma was now about to be removed. Though the fact was not yet known, even to her intimate friends and relatives, she was aware of it, and she wanted to escape the pitying glances to which she had never become accustomed, until such a time as her hope would be beyond doubt, when no more reproach could strike her.

The Annunciation to Mary. Luke 1, 26—38.

Gabriel's visit to Nazareth: V. 26. **And in the sixth month the Angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth,** v. 27. **to a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary.** In the sixth month after the Lord had remembered Elisabeth to carry out a part of His design and prophecy for the sake of fallen mankind, He made preparations for a still more wonderful event, by commissioning the same messenger as in the previous case, Gabriel, to serve as the bearer of another message. Luke is very careful to make all statements which

6) Clarke, *Commentary*, 5, 359.

are necessary to make the situation clear. Though Mary and Joseph were both of the house of David, they did not live in the city of their fathers, but in Nazareth of Galilee, a small town in the mountains southwest of the Sea of Galilee. To a virgin by the name of Mary the angel was sent, not to a young married woman, as the critics of the virgin birth will have it. Mary was still a virgin, as she protests to the angel, v. 34. But she was engaged, or espoused, according to Jewish custom, to a man by the name of Joseph, who was also of the royal blood. The betrothal among the Jews, according to the command of God, was as binding as the consummated marriage. It was attended with many ceremonies and took place about a year before the wedding. Simple words, but fraught with most momentous meaning! As one commentator expresses it: "At length the moment is come which is to give a Son to a virgin, a Savior to the world, a pattern to mankind, a sacrifice to sinners, a temple to the Divinity, and a new principle to the world."

The message of the angel: V. 28. **And the angel came in unto her and said, Hail, thou that art highly favored, the Lord is with thee; blessed art thou among women.** V. 29. **And when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and cast in her mind what manner of salutation this should be.** V. 30. **And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary; for thou hast found favor with God.** V. 31. **And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name Jesus.** V. 32. **He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of His father David.** V. 33. **And He shall reign over the house of Jacob forever; and of His kingdom there shall be no end.** The first message of the New Testament was given in the secrecy of the Holy Place in the Temple, the second in the seclusion of a virgin's home in Nazareth. The beautiful greeting of the angel on this occasion has been abused by the Catholic Church in being made a prayer of their idolatrous practise. It is known as the Angelus and begins with the words "Ave Maria." But the words of the greeting and Mary's behavior at this time prove that the Catholic claim is untenable, that praying to Mary is a custom which she would least of all have tolerated had she known about it. For the angel calls her one that has been much graced, graciously accepted, highly favored, endued with grace. Not as a mother or dispenser of grace, but as a daughter and recipient of grace she is addressed. She is given the assurance that the Lord is with her. She is fully and altogether dependent upon Him, her God and her Savior. The effect of the sudden apparition and the strange greeting was naturally a startling one. Mary was much disturbed, but not with doubting fear, but because she felt that it meant something altogether unusual, the exact nature of which did not as yet appear. Her humility made her shrink back from the fulness of such grace, for that is the natural effect of the assurance of God's mercy upon poor, sinful mortals. She cast in her mind, she thought of possible reasons for such a manner of greeting. She was not in a state of hysterical excitement, but reasoned very calmly as to the "why" of the angel's words. The angel quickly proceeds to enlighten her by bidding her not to fear, since she had found grace in the sight of God. Although she was the chosen mother of the Savior, yet she was in need of grace. "Though the Virgin Mary is blessed above all women, that such grace and honor was never given to any other woman, yet the angel with these words draws her down to the level of all other saints, since he clearly says: Whatever she may be she is by grace, and not by merit. Now the difference between Him that gives grace and him that receives grace must always be maintained. With Him that gives grace we should seek grace, and not with him that himself has enjoyed grace." 7) And now the angel explains the extraordinary distinction which would be conferred upon her. She would, as a virgin, conceive and give birth to a son. To try to weaken this announcement by saying that Mary might have assumed, as an espoused wife, that the message had reference to a child to be born as the fruit of marriage with the man to whom she was betrothed is an effort of unbelief to eliminate miracles from the Bible. Cp. Matt. 1, 21. A true son, a true human being, though born of a virgin, He should be whose name should be called Jesus, Savior, Redeemer. Though the name was by no means unknown among the Jews, it would here be applied in its full significance for the first time. Of this miracle-child the angel says that He will be great, with a greatness of a singular nature, because His human nature was to be united with the divine nature, because He would therefore, in the most peculiar and restricted sense, be called the Son of the Highest, because the fulfilment of all the prophecies promising everlasting empire to the Son of David would be found in Him, because He would be the everlasting Head and Sovereign of the house of Jacob, of the Church of the New Testament, because His government and kingdom would be eternal. The gates and powers of death and hell shall never be able to injure or destroy the kingdom of Christ. The sum and substance of the entire Gospel-message is contained in these words of the angel; it was an inspired and inspiring announcement. "The angel asserts with powerful words that this son is at the same time true man and true God. For that He is a true man he proves with the words when he says first: 'Thou shalt con-

7) Luther, 13a, 1116.

ceive,' but, 'in thy womb,' that no one may understand a spiritual conception. . . . Secondly, because he says: 'Thou shalt bring forth a son,' since the conception which is done in the mind does not bear children out of the body. . . . But that He is true God is clear, first of all, from the words: 'He shall be called the Son of God.' . . . To none other is it said in particular, 'Thou art My Son,' but to this single One. Secondly, since to this person is given an eternal life. This cannot possibly be given to one that is a mere man, since it belongs to God only that He is a King without end. . . . This King is immortal and eternal, therefore He has a different kingdom than that of this world." 8)

The explanation of the miracle: V. 34. **Then said Mary unto the angel, How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?** V. 35. **And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee; therefore also that Holy Thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.** V. 36. **And, behold, thy cousin Elisabeth, she hath also conceived a son in her old age; and this is the sixth month with her, who was called barren.** V. 37. **For with God nothing shall be impossible.** V. 38. **And Mary said, Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word. And the angel departed from her.** Mary had received wonderful, overwhelming news, such as she could hardly be expected to grasp and comprehend, that she, the unknown, poor maiden, should be the mother of the Messiah; for the words of the angel permitted no other interpretation. She was ready, in humble trust, to accept the message. But she feels constrained to ask for an explanation, not a sign. She knew only of the ordinary course of nature by which children are born into the world, and which presupposes two parents. She knew herself to be a pure virgin, no man having known her. The angel accepts the question, and, in answering, rises to an exulting chant. God would here make a wonderful exception, He would set aside the usual course of nature. The Holy Spirit, the Power of the Highest, the miraculous life-producing Power, would here exert an influence which would produce a child without fleshly defilement, out of the flesh and blood of the virgin only. No human father would be present, nor would there be any intercourse according to the blessing given to men at the creation. The creative power of God would come upon her, overshadow her, and so the child which would be born would be called holy, the Son of God. The faith of Mary under these trying circumstances is certainly remarkable. "That is a high, excellent faith to become a mother and yet remain a simple virgin; this truly transcends sense, thoughts, also all human reason and experience. Mary here has no example in all creatures on earth to which she could hold and thus strengthen herself; yea, they all are against faith; for she is there all alone, who contrary to all reason, sense, and thoughts of men, without the agency of man, should bear and become a mother. . . . Therefore she was obliged to abandon everything, even herself, and cling to the Word alone which the angel proclaimed to her from God. . . . As it happened to Mary with her faith, so it happens to all of us, that we must believe what is opposed to our understanding, thoughts, experience, and example. For that is the property and nature of faith, that it will not permit anything to stand outside of itself, on which a person might rely and rest but only the mere Word of God and the divine promise." 9)

But the angel, as if filled with compassion for Mary's difficult position, gives her some more information which would tend to set her mind at ease and reassure her. He tells Mary that her kinswoman, Elisabeth, who was of an age in which the normal course of nature no longer permitted the procreation of children, and who for that reason had been commonly considered barren, had been relieved of her reproach by God, this being the sixth month since the Lord had remembered her to give her a son. For — and very impressively the angel brings out the fact — with God there is impossible not one thing; every word of promise which He has made He will carry into execution at His time. Upon this word she might rely without doubt; this would be a powerful support to her faith. And in this way Mary accepted the message in its entirety. There were still doubtless many points concerning which she knew no explanation, which were beyond her power of comprehension. But she simply believed. She put herself entirely into the Lord's service, as His servant. His work might be carried out in her. Hers was not only obedient submission, but also patient, longing expectation. She was ready to be the mother of the God-man, just as the angel had said. She herself had been conceived and born in sin, after the manner of all ordinary human beings, and the doctrine of Mary's immaculate conception is a piece of Catholic fiction, but her Son, born of a woman, yet without carnal intercourse, by which He would have been conceived in sin, is the holy Son of God, the Redeemer of the world.

Mary's Visit to Elisabeth. Luke 1, 39—56.

The salutation of Mary and Elisabeth's answer: V. 39. **And Mary arose in those days and went into the hill country with haste, into a city of Juda,** v. 40. **and entered into the house of Zacharias, and saluted Elisabeth.** V. 41. **And it came to pass that, when Elisabeth heard the salutation of Mary,**

8) Luther, 12, 1882.

9) Luther, 11, 2190. 2191.

the babe leaped in her womb; and Elisabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost; v. 42. **and she spake out with a loud voice and said, Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb.** V. 43. **And whence is this to me that the mother of my Lord should come to me?** V. 44. **For, lo, as soon as the voice of thy salutation sounded in mine ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy.** V. 45. **And blessed is she that believed; for there shall be a performance of those things which were told her from the Lord.** In those same days Mary got ready for a visit to her kinswoman, for the news of the angel had filled her with joy. She lost no time in journeying up into the mountainous country of Judea, where the city of priests was situated in which Zacharias lived with his wife Elisabeth. Note the expression "with haste." "Quickly; as a chaste, fine, pure maid that did not let her foot rest. Such a maid or woman is one that takes hold of a thing and brings it about. Then again there are lazy, slothful women, busybodies, that neglect everything at home, sleep, and permit damage to be done, only think of eating, only do harm. But of Mary the evangelist says that she was vigorous and did not seek meddlesomeness to babble about this or that, as young and old women now commonly do: when they come together, they govern and reform with their talk the entire city, slander the people, want to run every house. If therefore a young or old woman nowadays is energetic, she is worthy of all honor. But she is seldom found and is a rare bird." 10) When Mary thus, with characteristic energy and haste, had completed her journey and came to the house of Zacharias, she saluted Elisabeth, gave her the greeting of a dear relative and friend. But then a miracle happened. The mother's joy and the urging of the Holy Ghost produced in the unborn son of Elisabeth a supernatural, joyful movement, for John, even at this time, was filled with the Holy Spirit. And upon Elisabeth the Spirit acted in a miraculous way, filling her with the gift of divination and prophecy. Her words, therefore, were an unrestrained utterance under the influence of irrepressible feeling. Her statement is a fine bit of exalted poetry. She calls Mary, the mother, blessed among all women, on account of the high distinction conferred upon her, and she calls the babe that was to be born of her blessed. The most wonderful mother of the most wonderful Son! The prophetic Spirit urges her to unfold the future. She considers herself unworthy of receiving, in her modest home, the mother of her Lord. She knew that Mary was to be the mother of the Messiah; she knew that her Lord would be born a true human being, and that her trust in Him would bring her salvation. She was one of the few in Israel that understood the prophecies concerning the Seed of the woman, the Child of the virgin, in their right sense. She tells Mary about the miraculous movements which she experienced when she heard the voice of her greeting. She declares her to be happy, to be in a state of the highest felicity, because Mary had believed the angel's message, because the things she hopes for will surely come to pass. It was an outpouring of sublime enthusiasm which Elisabeth here gave utterance to, and it must have done much to strengthen still more the faith of Mary in the fulfilment of the prophecy concerning her Son.

The hymn of Mary: V. 46. **And Mary said, My soul doth magnify the Lord,** v. 47. **and my spirit hath rejoiced in God, my Savior.** V. 48. **For He hath regarded the low estate of His handmaiden; for, behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed.** V. 49. **For He that is mighty hath done to me great things; and holy is His name.** V. 50. **And His mercy is on them that fear Him from generation to generation.** The salutation of Elisabeth had filled Mary with the highest joy, with the happiness of faith, it stimulated her to a song which breathes the spirit of humble faith, giving all glory to God alone. Note: So thoroughly familiar was Mary with the writings of the Old Testament that her hymn is cast, almost involuntarily, in the words of the Old Testament poets. All the psalms that had been sung in honor of the Messiah served to give her the thoughts and phrases for her great hymn of the New Testament. Elisabeth had praised her faith, but she gives all glory and honor to God alone. Her soul magnifies, makes great, exalts, praises the Lord; He is the theme of her song; and her spirit rejoices, is exceedingly happy in God, her Savior. She did not deem herself sinless or beyond the need of redemption. She knew that the Savior, though her own son, would have to earn her salvation as well as that of all the other people in the world. For He, God the Savior, has looked down, in mercy and kindness, upon the humble station of His servant, as she humbly calls herself. His purpose was to change the condition of this lowly maiden. Note that she says low estate, and not humility, to avoid the semblance of self-righteous assertion. For this act of God shown to her all generations would declare her to be happy; poetical for: all men that would learn of it. They would praise the Lord of heaven that He had revealed and magnified His grace upon this lowly maid, to make her the mother of His Son. For to me has done great things the Mighty One; and holy is His name. His power is unlimited to do His will. The adjectives mighty and holy express the essence of the majesty of God. But the other side of His nature is revealed still more wonderfully in the work of redemption. His mercy is new from generation to generation upon them that fear Him. God delights in the salvation and hap-

10) Luther, 7, 1524.

piness of all His creatures, because His name is mercy, and His nature is love.

The conclusion of the hymn: V. 51. **He hath showed strength with His arm; He hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts.** V. 52. **He hath put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree.** V. 53. **He hath filled the hungry with good things, and the rich He hath sent empty away.** V. 54. **He hath holpen His servant Israel in remembrance of His mercy;** v. 55. **as He spake to our fathers, to Abraham, and to his seed forever.** V. 56. **And Mary abode with her about three months, and returned to her own house.** Mary praises the strength of God's arm, which He has made manifest. He has scattered into all the winds those that were proud and arrogant in the imagination of their own hearts. Those that rise up in haughty dependence upon their own ability in any field whatsoever, physical, mental, or moral, will find themselves without a hold. And God the Savior is especially impatient of those that depend upon their own righteousness and look down with contempt upon others whose lives may be marred with some transgression that is stigmatized before men. He deposes the mighty ones from their thrones, and elevates the meek and lowly. His rule over the world is unquestioned, absolute; when He comes forward in the majesty of His omnipotence, no one can withstand Him. The hungry He has filled with good things, giving them not only the necessities, but more than they need. Those that hunger and thirst after the gift of righteousness, because they realize the manifold shortcomings in their own life, these He fills with the wonderful gifts of His rich store. But the rich, those that deem themselves above every want, that are fully satisfied in self-sufficiency, that do not feel the need of a Savior, they are sent away in shame and disgrace, and with empty hands. They go back into their houses without the assurance of complete satisfaction made before God by the redemption of Christ Jesus. For God has at all times come to the aid of His child and servant Israel, of those that believe in Him; and the moral assistance of the Lord is worth more than all the actual attempts to help of the whole world. For God remembers His mercy, the covenant of grace which He made with Abraham and renewed with the patriarchs, according to the promise that in Abraham and his seed all nations of the earth should be called blessed. The Messiah was born from the descendants of Abraham and David, and thus all the people of the world have everlasting joy and blessing in this Son of Abraham and David. Thus Mary, in lofty and picturesque language, portrayed the condition which would obtain in the kingdom of her great Son, the Messiah, whose birth was so near at hand. The majesty of the strong God of Sabaoth would be made manifest in justice and righteousness upon those that exalt themselves in proud haughtiness. But the mercy and grace of the Lord would be revealed and appropriated to the poor, needy, and lowly, upon those that have cast aside all self-righteousness and place their hope and trust in the Messiah of prophecy. These are the true Israel, the true seed of Abraham, who will therefore also inherit all the blessings which should come upon all the people of the world by that one seed of Abraham, Jesus Christ.

Mary's hymn recalls, not only the song of Hannah, but also many passages in the Psalms, as well as in the songs of Miriam and Deborah. We might compare Ps. 113 and 126, also Ps. 31, 8; 34, 2. 3; 138, 6; 71, 19; 111, 9; 33, 10; 34, 10, and others. The grace of God, His holiness, His justice, and especially His faithfulness are celebrated. The whole forms an animated doxology of singular beauty and power, a fitting hymn for the Church of the New Testament to sing the praises of the God of its salvation.

Mary remained with Elisabeth for about three months, showing her kinswoman all sympathy and kindness. After that time, tact and the regard for her own condition made her return home imperative.

The Birth of John the Baptist.

Luke 1, 57—80.

The birth and circumcision of John: V. 57. **Now Elisabeth's full time came that she should be delivered; and she brought forth a son.** V. 58. **And her neighbors and her cousins heard how the Lord had showed great mercy upon her; and they rejoiced with her.** V. 59. **And it came to pass that on the eighth day they came to circumcise the child; and they called him Zacharias, after the name of his father.** V. 60. **And his mother answered and said, Not so; but he shall be called John.** V. 61. **And they said unto her, There is none of thy kindred that is called by this name.** V. 62. **And they made signs to his father how he would have him called.** V. 63. **And he asked for a writing-table, and wrote, saying, His name is John. And they marveled all.** For Elisabeth the time was now fulfilled, according to the promise of God and the course of nature. A son was born to the aged parents, as God had promised through the angel. Now Elisabeth no longer hid herself and shut herself away from the interest of friends and neighbors. Those that were living near as well as the relatives at a distance heard the news very soon. Note: The text expressly states that the Lord had made great His mercy upon Elisabeth; it was His favor and grace that was here made evident. And everywhere there was rejoicing with the happy parents. On the eighth day, those that were concerned in the festival came together, chiefly the relatives, for this was the day of circumcision ac-

cording to God's command, at which time the name was usually given to the child. Their unanimous opinion was that the name of the boy should be Zacharias (conative imperfect or imperfect of repeated action), not that this had been a binding custom among the Jews, but because the only boy would fitly bear the name of the father. But here Elisabeth objected. Zacharias had, in the mean time, communicated to her the story of the wonderful appearance in the Temple, and she knew the name which the Lord had selected. This name, John, she now mentioned. To this they promptly voiced the objection that such a name, prevalent as it was among the Jews, was not found in her family. So they turned to Zacharias, who had heard the whole altercation and was quick to grasp their meaning as they looked expectantly at him. He therefore intimated that he wanted a writing-table, probably a small wax tablet, such as were in general use at that time, upon which the writing was done with a stylus. And then he wrote, he said in writing and probably spoke at the same time: John is his name. His form of putting it left no alternative, the matter was fully and completely settled at this time. God's command was carried out to the letter. The punishment for his lack of faith was now removed, and speech returned to him. Thus God has pity on His children when they have faltered or fallen, He helps them to conquer the evil with good and unbelief with belief. And thus faith is enabled to grow all the stronger, since all doubts have been conquered by the Word of God. But the assembled company wondered at this strange agreement of the parents in giving a name which was unusual in their family. It was their first intimation that this child was truly exceptional.

Further events: V. 64. **And his mouth was opened immediately, and his tongue loosed, and he spake, and praised God.** V. 65. **And fear came on all that dwelt round about them; and all these sayings were noised abroad throughout all the hill country of Judea.** V. 66. **And all they that heard them laid them up in their hearts, saying, What manner of child shall this be! And the hand of the Lord was with him.** Two strange things connected with the story of John have been noted: The fact that the child was the son of parents past the age of bearing children, and the giving of a name which had not been in use in the family of Zacharias. Here is added the recovery of speech on the part of the father. For the greater part of a year the neighbors had known him to be dumb, and now, with the same suddenness as the calamity had overtaken him, the ban is removed from his tongue, for which he at once gives praise to the Lord. The effect upon the assembled company and upon all the inhabitants of the hill country of Judea was a very deep one. Not superstitious fear, but reverent awe took hold upon them. Wherever the story of these events was told, the people were similarly impressed. They felt that such singular and peculiar circumstances surrounded the birth of this child that God Himself must be concerned in his welfare, that all things pointed to an uncommon future for the boy. The usual comment was: What, then, will this child come to? And the people made a mental note of the circumstances with a view of watching further developments. If they had only continued their watchful attitude until John began his ministry on the banks of the Jordan! And the comment of the evangelist justifies the questioning of the people in the hill country: For the hand of the Lord was with him. This sentence sums up the whole history of John's childhood and anticipates some of the later developments.

A hymn of praise: V. 67. **And his father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Ghost and prophesied, saying,** v. 68. **Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for He hath visited and redeemed His people,** v. 69. **and hath raised up an horn of salvation for us in the house of His servant David;** v. 70. **as He spake by the mouth of His holy prophets, which have been since the world began:** v. 71. **that we should be saved from our enemies, and from the hand of all that hate us;** v. 72. **to perform the mercy promised to our fathers, and to remember His holy covenant;** v. 73. **the oath which He sware to our father Abraham** v. 74. **that He would grant unto us, that we, being delivered out of the hand of our enemies, might serve Him without fear,** v. 75. **in holiness and righteousness before Him, all the days of our life.** We have here another wonderful hymn of praise and prophecy, couched, for the most part, in terms of the Old Testament songs of praise. The Holy Ghost Himself, speaking through the mouth of Zacharias, was its author. Luther has written comments on many sections of it in various parts of his books. From the start, all praise, honor, and glory is given to God. The entire plan and work of salvation is a monument of His grace, to the praise of His glory. He is the God of Israel, originally of the Israel of the flesh; but since these children have rejected Him, the term now applies to spiritual Israel only, to His Church. Upon these He has looked with a view of helping them, of giving them the assistance which they needed above all, the redemption from sins. For this His people He has prepared a salvation, brought it about in the Messiah, the Redeemer. It was the redemption from a burden whose heaviness and damnableness they had not realized. "To visit is nothing else than to come to us, to lay before us and proclaim to us the wholesome Word, whereby we are saved." 11) In order to prepare this salvation for us, the Lord has raised up

11) Luther, 11, 2272.

a horn of salvation for us in the house of David, His servant. As in Ps. 18, 2, the word horn signifies a strong, firm, unwavering help. Our Lord is a strong, powerful Defender, the Redeemer out of the race of David that brought us full salvation. "'Horn' in the Hebrew language means power, defiance, rule, whereon one may rely. . . . But He adds: A horn of saving or salvation. Other kingdoms have their names and goods from which they are called. Some kingdoms are large, have much goods, many people, great honor, but only temporal goods; but this Kingdom is called a kingdom of salvation, a kingdom of grace, a kingdom of life, a kingdom of righteousness, a kingdom of truth, and whatever serves unto salvation. . . . God has here established a principality and kingdom, in which there is nothing but welfare and salvation." 12) These great blessings are the result of the promises which the Lord made through the mouths of His holy prophets, from the beginning of the world. The culmination of all the prophecies is always the same theme, salvation through the Messiah, liberation from the enemies and from the hands of all those that are filled with hatred toward us, the believers in Him. The spiritual enemies have been unceasing in their plans and attacks against the children of God, but God has carried out the plans of His mercy toward us, as to the fathers of old that trusted in Him. For He remembered His holy covenant and the oath which He swore to Abraham, that in him and his seed all the nations of the earth should be blessed. As a result of these promises God has given to the believers to serve Him without fear, since they are torn out of the hands of all their enemies. Such service may now be performed in holiness, in personal cleanness and sinlessness, and in righteousness, in the right relationship toward God, a perfect description of a New Testament Christian, Eph. 4, 24. "That he says He would deliver us from all our enemies must again be understood that this Kingdom is in battle and in the midst of the enemies; but they shall not win, but lose; and this deliverance and salvation shall serve that we serve Him eternally without fear. . . . The word 'without fear' includes that we are sure of the goods of this life and of that yonder. For a Christian is sure and certain that his sins are forgiven, though he still feels them; he is also sure that death cannot harm him, the devil cannot vanquish him, the world cannot prevail against him." 13)

A hymn of prophecy: V. 76. **And thou, child, shalt be called the prophet of the Highest; for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare His ways;** v. 77. **to give knowledge of salvation unto His people by the remission of their sins,** v. 78. **through the tender mercy of our God; whereby the Dayspring from on high hath visited us,** v. 79. **to give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.** V. 80. **And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, and was in the deserts till the day of his showing unto Israel.** From a contemplation of the wonderful gifts of the redemption Zacharias turns to a prophecy concerning the future of the son that had been born to him according to the promise of the Lord. John would be a prophet in the highest and fullest sense of the word, Matt. 11, 9. His life's work would consist in going before the face of the Lord as a true herald to prepare His ways before Him, as the prophets had said, Is. 40, 3; Mal. 3, 1. And when the proclamation of the Law would have prepared the hearts in removing all self-righteousness and supposed piety, then John would be able to dispense the knowledge of salvation, which consists in forgiveness of sins; redemption is transmitted through the remission of sins. "John is to come and give the people of God a knowledge, which is not to be a knowledge of sin, of wrath, of death, but a knowledge of salvation, that is, such preaching from which one learns how to be saved and delivered from death and sin. That is an art of which the world knows not one word." 14) And this preaching is made possible through the bowels, the heart of mercy, of our God. His whole heart yearns toward us with inexpressible love and tender mercy, and for the sake of that the Day-star from on high has visited us, the light, star, or sun is risen upon us in Jesus the Savior. This true morning star with the rays of God's divine love illumined the darkness which had been caused by sin and enmity toward Him. And the result is that those that sat in such darkness and shadow of death have felt the light and the warmth of His glow, Is. 60, 1. 2. Those unable to find their way in the darkness of spiritual death, He will awaken to true life, illumine them with the light of the Gospel, and guide them to the way of peace, Rom. 5, 1. It is a beautiful and effective, as well as complete description of the work which God performs in us through the Gospel. "This certainly means, as I think, cutting off all merit and good works from the forgiveness of sins, in order that no one may say: I have earned it. . . . Remission of sins has only one reason, namely, because God is merciful, and out of such mercy has sent and given us His Son that He might pay for us and we should be saved through Him. Therefore it reads thus: Forgiveness of sins is not the result of our merit, nor of our good works, but of the sincere mercy of God, that He has loved us of His own free will. We had with our sins earned the fire of hell, but God looked upon His boundless mercy. That is the reason why He sent His Son and for the sake of His Son forgives us our sins." 15) Of the

12) Luther, 11, 2273. 2274; 13a, 1147.
13) Luther, 11, 2286.
14) Luther, 13b. 2707.
15) Luther, 13b, 2709.

entire hymn, Augustine writes: "O blessed hymn of joy and praise! Divinely inspired by the Holy Ghost, and divinely pronounced by the venerable priest, and daily sung in the Church of God! Oh, may thy words be often in my mouth, and the sweetness of them always in my heart! The expressions thou usest are the comfort of my life; and the subject thou treatest of the hope of all the world!"

The evangelist concludes with a note concerning the youth of John the Baptist, saying that he grew in body and mind and spent his time out in the deserts until the Lord gave him an indication that the period of seclusion must be followed by that of public ministry.

Summary. *After a short preface, Luke relates the stories of the announcement of John the Baptist's birth, of the annunciation of the birth of Jesus, of the visit of Mary to Elisabeth, with the hymn of Mary, and of the birth, childhood, and youth of the Baptist, with the hymn of his father Zacharias.*

CHAPTER 2.

The Birth of Jesus and the Adoration of the Shepherds. Luke 2, 1—20.

The reason for the journey to Bethlehem: V. 1. **And it came to pass in those days that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed.** V. 2. **(And this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria.)** V. 3. **And all went to be taxed, every one into his own city.** V. 4. **And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; (because he was of the house and lineage of David:)** v. 5. **to be taxed with Mary, his espoused wife, being great with child.** All the statements of the evangelist are made with such obvious care and accuracy that there is no reason to doubt his record, aside from the fact that the inspiration makes the text correct. It happened, came about, in those days, the days of Herod the Great, king of Judea. There went out an order from the Emperor Augustus, who reigned from 30 B. C. to 14 A. D., that the entire world, the whole Roman Empire under his jurisdiction, which practically comprised the entire known world, should be entered into lists, all the people that belonged to the empire were to be registered, probably for the purpose of taxation, or for general statistical objects. Censuses of this kind were often taken in those days, in individual countries and provinces as often as once a year. The census here referred to was an unusual one, since it extended over the entire empire, over kingdoms as well as provinces. The time is fixed still more exactly by the statement that this enrolment was made, was actually executed, as a first one of its kind, when Cyrenius or Quirinius was governor of Syria, a Roman province, to which Judea belonged after the death of Archelaus. When the order was posted or proclaimed in Palestine that all people should be registered in the manner prescribed in the decree of Caesar, the inhabitants prepared to carry out the command. They went, every one to his own city, to the city from which his forefathers hailed. Among those that made ready for the registration was also Joseph, of the city of Nazareth in Galilee. Since he was of the house and family of David, the great king of Israel, he made the journey over the hills up to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem. And he did not go alone. Some time before, he had celebrated his marriage with Mary, a virgin of the same city of Nazareth, to whom he had been betrothed. She is here, with great exactness, called his betrothed wife, for though the wedding has been celebrated, the consummation of marriage has not taken place, Matt. 1, 24. 25. Mary was about to become a mother, but the order of the emperor had to be carried out, and therefore they risked the journey to Bethlehem. Note: According to the prophecy of Haggai 2, 6. 7, all the nations were to be shaken when the Desire of the world was to be born. And the decree of Augustus had to be formulated so that both Joseph and Mary were present in Bethlehem at this time, since the Messiah was to be born in Bethlehem, Micah 5, 2. A fitting name for the birthplace of the Redeemer, Bethlehem, the house of bread, since the Bread of Life came to earth in that little city, John 6, 35.

The birth of the Savior: V. 6. **And so it was that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered.** V. 7. **And she brought forth her first-born Son, and wrapped Him in swaddling-clothes, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.** The infinite simplicity of Luke's account of the great miracle of the incarnation is worthy of special notice, since it serves to sustain the fact of the inspiration of the story. If he had written as an ordinary human author would, he would probably have been carried away by the indescribable glory of the miracle and declaimed in exulting rhapsodies of the event which stands in the center of the history of the world. It happened, it came about, Luke merely states. And yet, the entire Old Testament stands behind these words; it represented the grand fulfilment of the wish and desire of thousands of believers of the ancient world, not only in Judea, but wherever the prophecies of old had become known. While they were there in Bethlehem, to which town God had directed their steps in such a singular way, it came

about that the days of Mary, according to the course of nature, were fulfilled. The Son that had been promised by the angel was born. Mary herself took the Wonder-child and gave Him the first care. By reason of her poverty and on account of the absence from home she was not provided with the necessary clothing. So she wrapped Him in such scraps of clothing as were available and made a bed for Him in a manger, out in the stable, to which they had retired, since there was no room for them in the inn, in the great enclosure which was used as a place for lodging in Oriental towns. According to many commentators, the place where Christ was born was one of the caves or grottoes at Bethlehem, some of which are used for such purposes to the present time. "Some also dispute as to the manner of the birth, that Mary brought Him forth during a prayer, in great joy, before she was aware of it, without all pain. Whose devotion I do not reject, since it may have been invented for the sake of the simple Christians. But we should adhere to the gospel, which states that she bore Him, and to the article of our faith, where we confess: He was born of Mary, the virgin. There is no fraud here, but, as the words say, a true birth. . . . When they came to Bethlehem, the evangelist shows how they were the lowliest and the most despised; they were obliged to yield to every one, until they, shown into a stable, had a common inn, a common table, a common room, and a common bed with the beasts. In the mean time many an evil person occupied the place of honor in the inn, and permitted himself to be honored as a lord. There no one perceives or knows what God performs in the stable. . . . Oh, what a dark night was over Bethlehem then, that the city knew nothing of the Light! How strongly God indicates that He does not regard what the world is, has, and does; and again, the world proves how thoroughly she does not understand nor realize what God is, has, and does." 16) Note also: The God-man, who here lies before us as the first-born Son of Mary, is at the same time the absolute miracle and the most inestimable benefit; God and man, the old and new covenants, heaven and earth, meet in a poor manger. He that, either secretly or openly, denies this truth can never understand the significance of the Christmas festival — perhaps never experience the true Christmas joy. Also: The lowly birth of the Savior of the world coincides exactly with the nature of His kingdom. The origin of the Kingdom was not of earth; one of its fundamental laws was to deny self and for love to serve others; its end, to become great through abasement, and to triumph by conflict: all this is here exhibited before our eyes.

The message to the shepherds: V. 8. **And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night.** V. 9. **And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them; and they were sore afraid.** V. 10. **And the angel said unto them, Fear not; for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.** V. 11. **For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord.** V. 12. **And this shall be a sign unto you: ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling-clothes, lying in a manger.** In that same country, in the neighborhood of the town of Bethlehem, there were shepherds. They were out in the fields, whether under the open sky or in booths, is immaterial. They may have constructed a rude shelter against the chilliness of the night air. They were watching the watches of the night, taking turns about in caring for the flock lest some of them stray away or be carried off by wild beasts. These flocks may well have belonged to the herds that were being driven up to Jerusalem by easy stages, to be used as sacrifices in the Temple, as one commentator has remarked. There was nothing unusual about the situation, nor were the shepherds in a superstitious state of mind. Note: The fact that the flocks were out in the open at night and not in the corral or fold does not disprove the traditional date of the Savior's birth, as it was definitely established in 354 by Bishop Liberius. It is by no means unusual for the meadows to be in the best condition at the end of December.

While the shepherds, who belonged to the poor and lowly of the land, were thus engaged in the pursuit of their calling, a miracle of the Lord took place in Bethlehem, of which they were to receive the first news. Note: Not the great and mighty of the nation were chosen as the recipients of the wonderful tidings of the nativity of Christ, just as not proud Jerusalem, but little Bethlehem became the Lord's birthplace, but lowly shepherds of the plains. To these a supernatural revelation was suddenly given: an angel of the Lord came upon them, he stood over against or above them. It was an unexpected apparition out of the quietness of the solemn night, beneath the starry heavens. At the same time, the glory of the Lord lighted up the space about the shepherds, from the face and form of the angel himself, as a messenger from the splendor of the heavens. And they feared a great fear. They were thoroughly frightened. Sinful man cannot endure the light from the presence of the holy God. Besides, the suddenness of the angel's appearance caught them unawares; there was no gradual preparation of their senses for the culmination that burst upon them. But the message of the angel was reassuring with all the beauty and love of the Christmas spirit. They should not give way or remain under the domination of fear, for his is a message which is, in substance, the entire

16) Luther, 11, 123. 121.

Gospel. He announces to them a great joy, in order that their hearts may be filled with that joy. And these wonderful tidings will not be confined to them alone, but are intended, and will be proclaimed, to all people. The expression is so general that it should not be applied to the people of Israel only, but properly to all nations of the world. And now the voice of the angel rises, in joyful ecstasy, to the climax of his announcement: For unto you is born this day a Savior, who is Christ the Lord, in the city of David. The angel used terms with which the shepherds were familiar from their youth, in which they were wont to express their hopes for the salvation of Israel. Savior denotes such a person as perfectly frees us from all evil and danger, and is the author of perpetual salvation. And Christ or Messiah is He for whose coming the Jews looked with anxious desire, in and through whom the real believers in Israel expected the Kingdom which should last throughout eternity. Note: The true humanity and the true divinity of the new-born Babe is here clearly stated, even as the angel summarizes the prophecies of old, in calling Bethlehem the city of David. Furthermore: Christ was born a true man, to purify and sanctify our sinful conception and birth. "To help our poor, miserable birth, God has sent another birth, which had to be pure and unsullied, if it should cleanse our impure, sinful birth. That then is the birth of Christ the Lord, His only-begotten Son. And for that reason He did not want to let Him be born from sinful flesh and blood; but He should be born of a virgin. . . . That is what the angel wishes to say with these words: 'Unto you is born.' Which implies: All that He is and has is yours, and He is your Savior; not only that you regard Him thus, but that He can deliver you from sin, death, devil, and all misfortune; yea, as great as He is, He is born for you, and is yours with all that He has."[17] And, finally: Note the word "unto you." "As though he would say: Until now you have been captives of the devil; he has plagued you with water, fire, pestilence, sword, and who can narrate all the misfortune? . . . And when he has tortured soul and body, eternal death threatens afterward. Unto you, the angel says, unto you that were held captive under this harmful, evil, poisonous spirit, who is the prince and God of the world, the Savior is born. The words 'unto you' should surely make us happy. For to whom does he speak? To wood or stone? No, to men, and not to one or two only, but to all the people. . . . We have need of Him, and for our sakes He has become man. Therefore it behooves us people that we accept Him with joy, as the angel here says: Unto you is born a Savior."[18]

In order that the shepherds may not be misdirected or go astray in the overcrowded city, the angel gives them specific directions how they may find the Child and recognize Him at once. He would be found wrapped in swaddling-clothes and lying in the crib of a stable. Those directions were as explicit and exact as any that could be given, since there would be no other child in such poor and lowly circumstances as this one, the Savior of the world.

The angels' hymn of praise: V. 13. **And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying,** v. 14. **Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.** The message of the first angel had culminated in a song of praise and exultation. But his hymn was a mere preamble to the chorus that was sung there on the fields of Bethlehem and has since rolled out in a triumphant wave of melody over the whole world. For hardly had the messenger finished his announcement, when, with the same suddenness that had characterized his own coming, a heavenly choir appeared, a multitude of the heavenly host. Their joy over the miraculous birth of the Savior of the world was so great that even the heaven of heavens could not contain it all. They must needs come down and celebrate the event which is absolutely unique in the history of the world and sing faith into the hearts of men by their hymn of praise to God. Their glorious hymn, which has since been sung and reechoed by millions of believing Christians that accepted the Babe of Bethlehem as their Savior, may be divided into two or three parts or strophes, according to a slight difference in the reading of the Greek text. Glory to God in the highest, to Him whose abode, according to His eternal majesty and glory, is above all, in the highest places, as supreme over all creatures in the universe. All the glory and praise for the work of redemption belongs to Him alone, who is the Author and Finisher of salvation, who was in Christ, reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing to them their sins, 2 Cor. 5, 18. 19. "Such fruit, the angels sing, will follow, and is now possible that God be properly honored on high. Not with external works; they cannot ascend up into heaven, but with the heart that lifts itself up from the earth to the height, to such a merciful God and Father with thanksgiving and cordial trust."[19] And on earth peace, brought by the coming of the Prince of Peace, Is. 9, 5. The transgression of Adam and all his descendants had brought upon them the wrath of God; there was a state of continual enmity and warfare between God and man on account of sin. But in and with the Savior there is an end of the battle. He has restored the right, the proper relation between God and man. "Just as the angels have sung that those who would know and receive this child Jesus, would

17) Luther, 11, 2022. 2023.
18) Luther, 13a, 59. 60.
19) Luther, 13a, 71.

give God the glory in all things, thus they sing here and wish, yea, they give us the comforting promise that the tyranny of the devil would now have an end, and the Christians among each other lead a fine, peaceable, quiet life, who also gladly help and counsel, anticipate strife and disunion, and live in all kindness with each other, that among them for the sake of this Child a peaceful government and pleasant manner would obtain, in which each one will do the best for the other." 20) And this peace will be toward the men of good will, it will assure all men of the good will of the heavenly Father in and with the Babe in the manger. "That is the third strophe, that we may have a happy, joyful, defiant courage against all suffering which may happen to us, that we may say to the devil: Thou canst not make it so evil that thou spoil my joy, which I have through this child. That is what good will means, a happy, quiet, joyful, courageous heart, that is not much concerned, no matter how things go, and says to the devil and the world: I cannot leave my joy for your sake, and I shall not feel concerned on account of your wrath; do as you please, Christ gives me more joy than you do sorrow. Such a heart the angels grant and wish us with their hymn." 21) Note: "This angelic song is the keynote of the famous Gloria in Excelsis, which was used as a morning hymn in the Greek Church as early as the second or third century, and thence passed into the Latin, Anglican, and other churches, as a truly catholic, classical, and undying form of devotion, sounding from age to age and from generation to generation. Sacred poetry was born with religion, and the poetry of the Church is the echo and response to the poetry and music of angels in heaven. But the worship of the Church Triumphant in heaven, like this song of the angels, will consist only of praise and thanksgiving, without any petitions and supplications, since all wants will then be supplied and all sin and misery swallowed up in perfect holiness and blessedness. Thus the glorious end of Christian poetry and worship is here anticipated in its beginning and first manifestation." 22)

The visit and adoration of the shepherds: V. 15. **And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us.** V. 16. **And they came with haste, and found Mary, and Joseph, and the Babe lying in a manger.** V. 17. **And when they had seen it, they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this Child.** V. 18. **And all they that heard it wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds.** V. 19. **But Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart.** V. 20. **And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told unto them.** Luke's song of the nativity is not yet ended; he has a story of some Christmas Christians to tell, and its effect is enhanced by its great simplicity. Hardly had the angels left the field to return back to heaven, when the shepherds began to speak to one another, repeating the words over and over, as people are apt to do when under the influence of great excitement. Come, let us go! they cry. They want to take a short-cut, they want to go the nearest way to Bethlehem; there is no time to lose. They wanted to see this matter, they wanted to behold with their own eyes this miracle. Not to verify the message of the angel; no, they were sure of the truth of his message. The thing is settled by the angelic proclamation: the thing, the miracle, has come to pass; the Lord has made it known unto us. They believed the word that had been preached to them, they trusted in the Gospel-message, the content of the angel's message was a fact to them. To trust, not in feelings nor in surmises, but in the sure Word of the Gospel, that is the essence of the faith required by God at all times. And they suited their actions to their words. They came hurrying and found everything just as the angel had told them. This was a confirmation of their faith which filled their hearts with joy. There was Mary, the mother, there was Joseph, the foster-father, and there was the Child, that miracle-Child, whose name is Wonderful, lying in the crib, the manger of the stable. And now the Christmas believers became Christmas missionaries. It is impossible for a Christian not to give evidence in words and deeds of the faith that lives in his heart when he has seen and found Jesus the Savior in the Gospel. They made the matter known concerning this fact that was told them, all that happened to them, the wonderful message they received, the confirmation of the angel's words in a most accurate way. The story made a great stir in Bethlehem the next day, it aroused much interest. All the people that heard about it wondered, marveling being the common, the first result of the Gospel-message. Wherever the shepherds came and repeated their story, this was the effect. Only Mary is mentioned as an exception. Instead of wondering, she held fast the words, carefully guarding them as a sacred treasure and moving them back and forth in her heart. Mark well: All the people *wondered*, but Mary *thought* on all the wonderful things that happened to herself and to the shepherds. This distinction must be made to the present day. Many a person is struck by the beauty of the Gospel-story and expresses his views accordingly, but few there are that

20) Luther, 13a, 74.
21) Luther, 13a, 76.
22) Schaff, *Commentary, Luke*, 39.

take the time to meditate upon the great facts of our salvation, to move them back and forth in their hearts, to examine them from all sides, to discover all the beauties of these priceless treasures. "It is His will that His Word not only hover on the tongue, like foam on the water and froth in the mouth which a person spits out; but that it be pressed into the heart and remain such a mark and spot as no one can wash off, just as though it had grown there and is a natural thing, which does not permit itself to be erased. Such a heart was that of the Virgin Mary, in which the words remained as though graven therein." 23) Meanwhile the shepherds continued their work of spreading the news concerning the wonder-Babe, and when they had accomplished all that their heart bade them do, they returned to their daily labor. They had been God's messengers, as all true Christians should be, they had been bearers of the glorious tidings of salvation. But they did not presume to be more than their station permitted. They praised and magnified God that they had been graciously permitted to hear the news concerning their salvation. What they had seen and heard in that night was engraven upon their hearts in letters of light from above. Thus it should be with all believers in Christ, the Savior, since they are blessed in the same measure as the shepherds. In their external behavior and bearing there does not seem to be much difference between them and the children of the world. They attend to the work of their calling and are not ashamed if the Lord has given them a lowly station in life. But in their heart there is glorious light and life. In the midst of the heat and toil of the day they rejoice in God, their Savior, who has delivered them from all the toil and trouble of this earthly life and opened the glories of heaven to them.

The Circumcision and Presentation of Christ. Luke 2, 21—40.

The circumcision: V. 21. **And when eight days were accomplished for the circumcision of the Child, His name was called Jesus, which was so named of the angel before He was conceived in the womb.** By His ancestry and birth, Jesus was a member of the Jewish race and of the Jewish Church. And Mary and Joseph observed all the rites and ceremonies of the Jewish law. On the eighth day of the Child's life, therefore, the sacrament of circumcision was administered to Him, whereby He was formally declared to be a member of the Jewish Church. Incidentally, according to the custom of the Jews, He was given a name by which He should be distinguished in the congregation of God's people. And in this instance there was no difference of opinion. As the angel had told Mary at the time of the annunciation, as he had told Joseph in a dream, Matt. 1, 21, so it was now done. The child's name was Jesus. In Him there is salvation for all men. Note: Jesus here, in submitting to the ordinance of circumcision, was made under the Law, Gal. 4, 4. 5. It was the beginning of His active obedience in behalf of all men. But it was the beginning also of His passive obedience, of His suffering. For here He paid the first drop of blood as the price of our souls, the full payment being completed when He committed His soul into the hands of His heavenly Father on the cross.

The presentation: V. 22. **And when the days of her purification according to the law of Moses were accomplished, they brought Him to Jerusalem to present Him to the Lord,** v. 23. **(as it is written in the Law of the Lord, Every male that openeth the womb shall be called holy to the Lord,)** v. 24. **and to offer a sacrifice according to that which is said in the Law of the Lord, a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons.** Luke finds it necessary to explain the rites connected with the purification for the sake of his readers that were not familiar with Jewish laws. The mother was unclean, according to the ordinances of Moses, for seven days after the birth of a son, and must then remain separate for a matter of another thirty-three days. These forty days altogether denoted the days of the Levitical cleansing, or purification, Lev. 12. At the close of this period the parents went up to Jerusalem with the Child to present Him to the Lord, for the first-born of man and beast belonged to the Lord, Ex. 13, 2, and had to be redeemed with a sacrifice. Since Mary and Joseph were poor, they could not afford to bring a lamb. Mary therefore brought the less expensive sacrifice, Lev. 12, 6. 8. The manner in which Mary brought her sacrifice, the sin-offering and the offering of thanksgiving, is the following. She entered the Temple through the "gate of the first-born," waited at the gate of Nicanor while the offering of incense was being made in the Holy Place. She then proceeded to the highest step of the stairway which led from the Court of the Women to the Court of Israel. Here a priest took the sacrifice from her hand and made the offering. She was then sprinkled with the blood to indicate the cleansing. Finally she paid five pieces of silver into the Temple treasury, placing the money (about 85 cents) into one of the trumpet-shaped treasure-boxes which stood in the Court of the Women. Note: The law really concerned only such women as became mothers after the usual course of nature. The Virgin and her Child might fitly have claimed exemption. But Christ humbled Himself so completely for the sake of us sinners, so completely did He want to become flesh of our flesh, that He submitted even to this humiliating rite of purification in the Temple.

The coming of Simeon: V. 25. **And, behold, there was a man in Jerusalem whose name**

23) Luther, 13a, 81.

was Simeon; and the same man was just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel; and the Holy Ghost was upon him. V. 26. **And it was revealed unto him by the Holy Ghost that he should not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ.** V. 27. **And he came by the Spirit into the Temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for Him after the custom of the Law,** v. 28. **then took he Him up in his arms, and blessed God, and said,** v. 29. **Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace according to Thy word;** v. 30. **for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation,** v. 31. **which Thou hast prepared before the face of all people,** v. 32. **a light to lighten the Gentiles and the glory of Thy people Israel.** The incident here told by Luke is so important that he introduces it with "Behold!" It brought a further testimony for the Christ-child and strengthened Mary in her faith. A man by the name of Simeon was in Jerusalem at that time. Nothing more is known of him than what the evangelist here relates, and yet he is known throughout Christendom. This man is described as just or righteous, which refers to the condition of his heart and mind, and devout or pious, which refers to the outward manifestation of the condition of his heart. He was one of the true Israelites. He practised, as he professed, the religion of his forefathers. And he was well versed in the prophecies concerning the Messiah, he was expecting, eagerly waiting for, the solace, the comfort of Israel. He had the proper understanding of the work of the Redeemer, he looked for a spiritual kingdom to be revealed. And the Holy Ghost was upon him, resting upon him, influencing his whole life and conduct. He had received a revelation, a very strong and urging impulse from the Holy Spirit, amounting to a definite promise, that he should not see death before he had seen the Christ of the Lord. Note the parallelism and contrast presented: in either case he would see, but on the one hand death, the end of life, on the other the highest revelation of the eternal Life from above, the Messiah of the almighty and gracious God. Just at this hour the Spirit impelled him to go up to the Temple, and in the same way he recognized the Christ-child on the arms of His mother, when the parents came to perform the sacrifice according to the law of Moses. Now the venerable old man did a thing which must have astonished both Mary and Joseph very much. Stepping up to them, he took the Babe in his arms and proceeded to sing a hymn of praise and thanksgiving to God. Its beauty is such that it has retained its position in the Church from the earliest times. Now at last the hope long cherished by him would be fulfilled, for he is altogether content to die. The words must sound strange in the ears of an unbeliever. For he speaks of a deliverance, of a departure, which would be made in full peace and satisfaction, in rich contentment, and which he knows will bring him lasting rest and quietness, the peace brought by the Christ-child. For his old eyes had seen the salvation of God, since the Child was the salvation of the world personified; in and through Him all the nations of the earth are blessed with full and complete redemption. This salvation in Jesus is prepared, is ready before the face of all nations; He brings a universal reconciliation, from which no one in the wide world is excluded. And the Gentiles are not only to be disinterested spectators of the miracle which shall be worked by this Child, but His salvation, He Himself, is the Light which is to illumine, to give the full brightness of the Gospel to the Gentiles, and which is to be the glory of His people Israel, Is. 9, 2; 42, 6; 49, 6; 60, 1—3. This beautiful hymn emphasizes, in the strongest possible terms, the fact of universal grace, that no one is excepted from the glorious working of that grace, that no one is excluded from the salvation earned by the merits of Christ. And, at the same time, Simeon, by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, teaches some of the effects of this universal grace and salvation upon those that accept Jesus as their Savior. All such believers will receive the illumination of the Gospel in mind and heart, will become partakers of the glory which pertains to the Messiah and His work. And they will learn to look upon temporal death as a deliverance, as a departure for better and more precious scenes, since they fall asleep in Jesus. "Whosoever has this Savior, the Savior of God, may have a peaceful, quiet heart. For though death be as terrible, the sin as mighty, the devil as evil and poisonous as he ever will, yet we have the Savior of God, that is, an almighty, eternal Savior; He is strong enough to move us out of death into life, out of sin into righteousness." [24])

Simeon blesses Joseph and Mary: V. 33. **And Joseph and His mother marveled at those things which were spoken of Him.** V. 34. **And Simeon blessed them, and said unto Mary, His mother, Behold, this Child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel; and for a sign which shall be spoken against,** v. 35 **(yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also,) that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed.** Whereas in the story of the shepherds only Mary is mentioned as having taken careful note of the words concerning her Son, both parents are here represented as marveling over the words of Simeon, which revealed the full significance of this Child for the world. Joseph, the foster-father, usually remains in the background. The words which Simeon here spoke filled them both with joyful wonder. They were gradually beginning to have an idea as to the meaning of all the prophecies con-

24) Luther, 13a, 227.

cerning the Babe in their arms. Simeon now spoke a blessing upon them both and addressed himself to Mary in a significant prophecy. This Child is set up, is established, by the will of God, for a double purpose. In the first place, He serves for the fall and the rising again of many in Israel, the true Israel, the members of God's kingdom. The natural pride and self-righteousness of every man, which is characteristic of man's inherited depravity, must fall and be removed entirely, before the resurrection in the faith in Jesus the Savior can take place. In the second place, He serves for a sign which will be opposed, spoken against. Many people, in fact, the majority, refuse to be humbled on account of this Savior, even though the assurance of succeeding glory is held out to them in the faith in Him. They harden their hearts against Him and are thus condemned through their own fault, 2 Cor. 2, 15. 16; 4, 3. 4. But in spite of all that He is a sign before the whole world, just as the serpent in the wilderness was a sign to all the people, even to those that refused to look at it until it was too late. In this manner, the thoughts of men's hearts are revealed. Many a leading Jew, whose reputation attested his perfect goodness, could not stand the test of this touchstone, Jesus the Christ, and rejected his own salvation. Incidentally, this state of affairs would prove a severe trial for Mary. Her mother's heart would feel the hatred directed against her Son most keenly. It would often be like a double-edged sword penetrating her soul, as when she was witness of the crucifixion with its attendant tortures.

The prophetess Anna: V. 36. **And there was one Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Aser; she was of great age, and had lived with an husband seven years from her virginity;** v. 37. **and she was a widow of about fourscore and four years, which departed not from the Temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day.** V. 38. **And she, coming in that instant, gave thanks likewise unto the Lord, and spake of Him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem.** V. 39. **And when they had performed all things according to the Law of the Lord, they returned into Galilee, to their own city Nazareth.** V. 40. **And the Child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom; and the grace of God was upon Him.** Simeon was not the only faithful soul in Jerusalem at that time. A prophetess, Anna, whose father and tribe are named, with Luke's attention to detail wherever it is available, joined the group. She was very far advanced in years. She had been married early in life, but had lived in holy wedlock only seven years, remaining a widow after the death of her husband and spending her time in serving the Lord. Though she was now eighty-four years old, she was one of the first to enter the Temple in the morning after the opening of the gates, and all day long she was a devout worshiper, passing the hours in fasting and praying, and thus showing herself to be a true minister or servant of the Lord. She likewise gave thanks, she took up the strain which had been begun by the aged Simeon, praising God for having sent His Savior into the world, which was in such dire need of redemption. And she thus did not merely serve her own devotion and edification, but she spread the good news abroad. She made it a practise to mention the fact of the Messiah's appearance to kindred spirits, as many as were still to be found in Jerusalem. For there were still some, if only a few, that were earnestly and prayerfully looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem, through the work of the Savior from sins.

But Joseph and Mary, after they had performed all that law and custom required of them, left the city. And Luke here omits all reference to the flight into Egypt and the sojourn in that country, continuing his narrative at the point where the parents of Jesus definitely settled in Nazareth. Here, in the little hill town of Galilee, the childhood and youth of Jesus was spent. Here He grew up and incidentally developed in physical strength. But what is far more important: He grew in knowledge, He was filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was with Him, obviously rested upon Him.

The Christ-Child in the Temple.

Luke 2, 41—52.

The trip to Jerusalem: V. 41. **Now His parents went to Jerusalem every year at the Feast of the Passover.** V. 42. **And when He was twelve years old, they went up to Jerusalem after the custom of the feast.** V. 43. **And when they had fulfilled the days, as they returned, the child Jesus tarried behind in Jerusalem; and Joseph and His mother knew not of it.** V. 44. **But they, supposing Him to have been in the company, went a day's journey; and they sought Him among their kinsfolk and acquaintance.** V. 45. **And when they found Him not, they turned back again to Jerusalem, seeking Him.** We have here the one authentic story from the life of Christ in the interval between the flight into Egypt and the beginning of His ministry. In this narrative He is standing on the threshold between childhood and youth, He is just about to enter upon the critical age of life. Luke's reference to the regular attendance of both the mother and the foster-father of Jesus at the festival of the Passover throws an interesting light upon their habits. The Law required that the men appear before the Lord three times in the year, Easter being one of the festivals when such attendance was demanded, Ex. 23, 17; Deut. 16, 16. The women were not included in the command of

the Lord, but Mary did not lack companions of her own sex, many of them taking advantage of the festival period to accompany their husbands and older sons to the capital city. Note: The regularity of the attendance is emphasized by the evangelist; a fine example for many parents in our days. When the boy Jesus was twelve years old, the parents followed the rule laid down by the elders that the sons must be trained in the observance of all religious duties and must take part in the festivals with their elders. It was the age at which the Jewish boys entered the secondary school, the *Beth-ha-Midrash*, the foremost of which was located at Jerusalem and usually conducted in one of the Temple-halls. This was known as *ha gadol*. The journey to Jerusalem upon the occasion of the great festivals was in itself a festival, especially for the younger members of the family. The people of the more remote parts of Palestine formed large parties for traveling together, most of them going afoot. From time to time some of the older members would begin to chant some of the Psalms of Degrees, Ps. 120—134, or some other hymns. As they came nearer to the city, and the festival spirit took hold of them, they would pluck flowers and branches from trees and wave them in unison with the cadence of their song. In this case, Jesus had been in the company of relatives and acquaintances from Nazareth and the surrounding country, and had spent the week of the festival as an interested participant. But when the festival closed and all the pilgrims returned home, the boy Jesus remained in Jerusalem without the knowledge of His parents. They believed Him to be with some of the members of their party and spent one whole day in leisurely inquiring for Him in the caravan. But when there was no trace of Him, the heart of the mother was filled with grave forebodings. They hurried back to Jerusalem. They searched the city for three days.

His Father's business: V. 46. **And it came to pass that after three days they found Him in the Temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them and asking them questions.** V. 47. **And all that heard Him were astonished at His understanding and answers.** V. 48. **And when they saw Him, they were amazed. And His mother said unto Him, Son, why hast Thou thus dealt with us? Behold, Thy father and I have sought Thee sorrowing.** V. 49. **And He said unto them, How is it that ye sought Me? Wist ye not that I must be about My Father's business?** V. 50. **And they understood not the saying which He spake unto them.** The three days' search with its attendant anxiety may well have aroused the thought in Mary's heart that the prophecy of Simeon was even now being fulfilled. But at last Mary and Joseph found Jesus, after assiduously searching over the whole city, in the Temple, sitting in the midst of the learned teachers, in the hall where the school-classes of the children of the Law, the great high school, assembled for advanced instruction to learn to keep the commandments. There He was sitting, outwardly in the rôle of a pupil, but in reality in earnest conference, in which He assumed almost a teacher's functions. He was giving due attention to the explanations of the doctors, but He was also putting searching questions, to the amazement of all those that were present to hear Him. His understanding, His ability to penetrate a given matter, and the answers which He gave, were of a kind to provoke astonishment. Here was something of the rare insight and the ease of presentation which in later years delighted His audiences. But Mary and Joseph were disturbed on account of the apparent audacity of the boy, which seemed to them like forwardness. And Mary, still full of the excitement of the search and with her mother's heart yearning toward her Son, reproachfully asked why He had dealt with them thus, not realizing that the fault was not His, but theirs. Note: The tactful way in which Mary refers to Joseph is an indisputable proof of the wisdom with which she brought up her Child; a lesson for many modern parents. They had sought Him with anxious solicitude. But Jesus does not accept the reproof. Not reproachfully, but with all the sincerity and boldness of holy childhood, He asks her why they had sought in that manner. He gives them an inkling of the purpose of His life. They should know that He must be about His Father's business. This is the obligation of His life: the things of His Father He must be engaged in, be concerned about. The Temple was the place where the service of His Father was supposed to be most perfect, where the Word of grace was supposed to be taught. "Wherefore the Temple was also called His sanctuary and sacred dwelling, since there He, through His Word, showed His presence and permitted Himself to be heard. Thus Christ is about His Father's business when He speaks to us through His Word and through it brings us to the Father." [25] This answer of Jesus, with its implication of divine sonship, was beyond the understanding even of Mary, who had remembered all the sayings concerning her Son.

The return to Nazareth: V. 51. **And He went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them; but His mother kept all these sayings in her heart.** V. 52. **And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man.** A period of approximately eighteen years is covered in this simple statement of the evangelist. Although He had given His parents evidence of a greater and higher calling, He yet went with them as an obedient son. He was subject to them. In His complete fulfil-

25) Luther, 11, 453.

ment of the Law for our sakes He willingly subjected Himself to every commandment and rendered a perfect obedience, in order to atone, also in this respect, for the sins of the children. Note: Mary's method of keeping the words she could not understand, of mulling over them continually, of preserving them fresh in her memory, deserves a wide imitation. Meanwhile it is recorded that the growth of Jesus was normal, both mentally and physically. His state of humiliation was so perfect that not only His body was subject to the general rule of nature, but also His mind. He continued His studies eagerly and gladly, He stored up a large fund of knowledge. Note: There was no sowing of wild oats in the sinless Christ. But the best and most excellent growth was that in spiritual matters. He grew in the favor, in the good will of both God and men. He lived His life in full accordance with the precepts which He learned, He put His full trust in His heavenly Father and gave evidence of this in a life of love, the most perfect example for the young men and women of all times.

Summary. *Jesus is born at Bethlehem, visited by the shepherds, given the name Jesus at His circumcision, presented to the Lord in the Temple, where Simeon sings his beautiful hymn, seconded by the prophetess Anna, and visits Jerusalem at the age of twelve years.*

THE ENROLMENT OF QUIRINIUS.

Many and various are the objections which have been made to Luke's approximate date of the birth of Christ. He is supposed to have confused the census of 8 B. C. with that of 6—7 A. D., and imagined that Christ was born in the days of a census held about ten or eleven years after the death of Herod; or, when Herod was king, and yet when a Roman viceroy was organizing the new province of Palestine. "It has been maintained by many scholars in modern times that the census is either a fiction or a blunder; that the circumstances connected with it, which Luke relates, are contrary to history; and, in short, that the story is unhistorical and impossible, not in one way merely, but in several. . . . It is affirmed that Quirinius never governed Syria during the life of Herod, for Herod died in 4 B. C., and Quirinius was governor of Syria later than 3 B. C., and probably in 2 or 1 B. C." [26] All the objections to Luke's account have been briefly summarized as follows: "1. Apart from the gospel, history knows nothing of a general imperial census in the time of Augustus. 2. There could have been no Roman census in Palestine during the time of Herod the Great, a *rex socius*. 3. Such a census at such a time could not have been carried out by Quirinius, for he was not governor in Syria then, nor till ten years later, when he did make a census which gave rise to a revolt under Judas of Galilee. 4. Under a Roman census it would not have been necessary for Joseph to go to Bethlehem, or for Mary to accompany him." [27]

It would not be absolutely necessary to pay attention to these objections, for the historical account inspired by God will stand against all statements of secular historians. Nevertheless, it is a matter of importance, in this case, to find that the archeological investigations of the last decades have vindicated the account of Luke and are tending more and more to confound the critics of the Bible. Documents have been found which show that enrolments in the Roman Empire were made every fourteen years, that this system was very probably inaugurated by Augustus, that the people went to their own towns for enrolment, that this was made on the basis of kinship. Archeology "has proved that the census was a periodic occurrence once in fourteen years, that this system was in operation as early as 20 A. D., and that it was customary for people to go to their ancestral abodes for enrolment. It has made it probable that the census system was established by Augustus, and that Quirinius was governor of Syria twice. . . . So far as the new material goes, it confirms the narrative of Luke." [28] The latest inscriptional evidence shows that Quirinius was a legate in Syria for census purposes in B. C. 8—6.[29] "If, as now seems fairly certain, Augustus began this system of a periodic census once in every fourteen years, and if this is what Luke refers to, we are able for the first time to reconcile all previous 'contradictions' concerning the date of our Lord's birth — which must now be placed somewhere between 9 B. C. and 6 B. C. The exact year cannot be named, as such general enrolments would necessarily be prolonged, especially in the outskirts of the empire." [30] The objection that a census could not have been made in Palestine, since Herod the Great was a *rex socius*, is absolutely untenable. Herod was king only by the special grace of Augustus and the Roman senate, and well he knew it. Even if other kings had been excused in such a case, which is not at all plausible, Herod would have been very careful about voicing any objections to a decree of Augustus.[31]

There is no need, therefore, of trying to construe the words of Luke in any but their actual sense. He knew what he was writing, and the Holy Ghost, who supervised every word, had the time fixed in just that way. It is a matter of satisfaction, however, that the science of archeology is aiding in silencing the objections of critics and convincing the gainsayers.

---

26) Ramsay, W. M., *Was Christ Born at Bethlehem*, 45—47. 101. 109.

27) *Expositor's Greek Testament*, 1, 470.

28) Barton, *Archeology and the Bible*, 432—437.

29) Moulton and Milligan, *Vocabulary*, 1, 60.

30) Cobern, *The New Archeological Discoveries*, 47. Cp. Deissmann, *Light from the Ancient East*, 268. 269; Ramsay, *l. c.*, 117—144.

31) Cp. *Lehre und Wehre*, 1902, 353—356.

CHAPTER 3.

The Ministry of John the Baptist.

Luke 3, 1—20.

The time of John's ministry: V. 1. **Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judea, and Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip tetrarch of Iturea and of the region of Trachonitis, and Lysanias the tetrarch of Abilene,** v. 2. **Annas and Caiaphas being the high priests, the word of God came unto John, the son of Zacharias, in the wilderness.** With the historian's propensity for exact dating of events, Luke here fixes the time when John began his ministry in the wilderness. It was in the fifteenth year of the rule of Emperor Tiberius, who became regent with Augustus in the year 765 after the founding of Rome, and assumed the full functions of Caesar two years later. This would place the beginning of John's ministry in the year 26 A. D., when Jesus was thirty years old, v. 23. Pontius Pilate was the sixth or fifth governor, or procurator, of the Roman province of Judea, from 26 to 36 A. D. Other parts of Palestine were governed by members of the Herod family, by sons of Herod the Great. Herod Antipas became tetrarch of Galilee and Perea after the death of his father, ruling there until 38 A. D. His brother Philip became tetrarch of Iturea and Trachonitis, also of Batanaea, Auranitis, Gaulanitis, and some parts about Jamnia. He died in 32 A. D. Finally, Lysanias, the tetrarch of Abilene, is mentioned. This was the second ruler of this name, the former having ruled sixty years before. This tetrarchy is mentioned by Luke, because the district afterwards formed part of the Jewish territory, "having been assigned by Caligula to his favorite, Herod Agrippa I, in A. D. 36." Annas and Caiaphas are named as the incumbents of the high priest's office. Annas had been deposed by the Romans, after having held the office from 7 to 14 A. D. Caiaphas, his son-in-law, became his successor, 14—35 A. D. But Hannas continued to hold high honor among the Jews and exercised great authority. Whenever the two names are mentioned together, that of the influential Hannas receives first place. It appears, then, that Luke's careful chronology in this instance has again been substantiated by records of secular history. This was God's appointed time. His word, His command, came to John, the son of Zacharias, in the wilderness. He had the direct authority of God for his ministry; the content of his preaching was given him by the Lord, just as the content of the preaching and the manner of fulfilling all the works of the pastor's office are definitely fixed by God, to this day, in Holy Scriptures. John, at this time, was in the wilderness, living chiefly in the mountainous wilderness southeast of Jerusalem, toward the Dead Sea, but also in the wilderness of Judea and in the valley of the Jordan.

John's ministry: V. 3. **And he came into all the country about Jordan, preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins;** v. 4. **as it is written in the book of the words of Esaias the prophet, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make His paths straight.** V. 5. **Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be brought low; and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways shall be made smooth;** v. 6. **and all flesh shall see the salvation of God.** John came down, at the appointed time, from the remote fastnesses of the hilly wilderness, for he had a message to the people of Israel, who very soon heard of his powerful preaching and flocked down to hear him. His chief place of sojourn during his ministry was in the valley along the Jordan, and he seems to have moved as far north as Galilee, on both sides of the river; it was under the jurisdiction of Herod of Galilee that he was imprisoned and murdered. His work was that of a herald, calling out, proclaiming; its summary was the baptism of repentance unto the remission of sins. Repent, for the kingdom of God is at hand. "It does not say: Repent, in order that the kingdom of heaven may come, but, because it has come. Grace goes before and is free, it is not earned through repentance; that we are able to repent, that in itself is a work of grace in us; by our means we should only attain to the despair of Cain and Judas. The complete change of heart and mind which is demanded in Scripture as an indispensable condition for the attainment of salvation, is no amelioration out of our own strength. . . . Therefore there is no repentance without faith, no rejecting of sin without the acceptance of the forgiveness of sin." [32] But where such true repentance obtains, there the Gospel gives the assurance of remission, and Baptism is the seal and surety of the completed redemption. In all this work of John, the prophecy of Isaiah was being fulfilled, in which the effect of his preaching was described in beautiful, figurative language, Is. 40, 3. His was the voice of one calling aloud, attracting attention by his calling, causing men to give ear to his message. Prepare the way of the Lord, make everything ready for His coming, let no one be indifferent to His advent. Make the highways straight; do away with all indirect, roundabout ways, let all hypocrisy be removed far from you; as He deals straightforward and with all directness, so do you meet Him. Every ravine shall be filled up; all anxious minds and discouraged hearts shall take confident courage, for the King is coming to

32) Besser, *Bibelstunden*, 1, 112.

pay the penalty for, and forgive, all their sins, Every mountain and hill shall be made low; all self-righteous, proud spirits shall be broken and brought to the understanding that without Jesus they cannot escape the wrath to come. The tortuous and crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places shall be made smooth; all those that are lost in the error of their own lusts, all those that are seeking, by devious byways, to enter into life, should cast their foolish thoughts far from them and come to Jesus, who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. And no one is excepted from the grace of God in Christ Jesus: all flesh shall see the salvation of God; all that is flesh, even the most depraved sinners, if only they turn from their sin and repent with all their heart, belong to the redeemed of the Lord and become partakers of His salvation. The universality of the redemption in Christ is emphasized very strongly, according to Luke's manner of bringing out this point. There is no mind so good, it must be changed; there is no mind so bad, it can be changed; there is no sin so small, it must be forgiven; there is no sin so great, it can be forgiven.

John's preaching: V. 7. **Then said he to the multitude that came forth to be baptized of him, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?** V. 8. **Bring forth therefore fruits worthy of repentance, and begin not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father; for I say unto you, That God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham.** V. 9. **And now also the ax is laid unto the root of the trees; every tree therefore which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down and cast into the fire.** These words of John, although directed mainly to the Pharisees and Sadducees, found their application to most of the people that came to John's baptism, inasmuch as they blindly followed their blind leaders in their hypocritical behavior. The great mass may ever be willing enough to come and hear an earnest preacher of repentance, but they have no intention of changing their heart. Therefore John fitly calls them generation of vipers, who have the nature and the attributes of serpents, Ps. 140, 3. Their pitiful attempt to escape the wrath to come by feigning piety and giving themselves the resemblance of truth-seekers will not save them from the wrath to come. Fruits of repentance, deeds of love and kindness that flow out of a heart which, in repentant humility, has turned to Christ, they only will be accepted as proof of an entire change of mind, of the fact that the new birth has taken place. Not fictitious, but real, actual fruits are demanded, such as measure up to the thoroughness of the change of heart. "In order that they might not glory in their repentance and righteousness, He says to them furthermore: Bring forth fruits worthy of repentance. As though He would say: You want to be righteous before all other men and depend upon your own works; change this foolish notion, acknowledge yourselves to be poor sinners, and perform other and better fruits of repentance." 33) And begin not to say within yourselves; the fact that Matt. 3, 8 has: Think not to say within yourselves, need cause us no uneasiness, for the Aramaic word which John undoubtedly used in this sentence, with a very slight change in the vocalization, may mean either "think" or "begin." And the Lord, by accepting both forms, has authorized both readings. That they had Abraham to their father, that they were direct, lineal descendants of the father of the Jewish race, that their genealogies supported them in this boast, upon this fact many Jews relied for their acceptance before God. But they are not all Abraham's children that can trace their family back to him, according to the flesh, John 8, 39; Rom. 4, 11. The real children of Abraham are those that, like him, place their trust for salvation in the Lord and His redemption. And besides, God can very well create children unto Abraham out of the stones of the desert. Of the entire Jewish nation the words were true that the ax was laid to the roots; if the national tree would not bring forth fruit when this last great chance was offered them and bring forth good fruit, then their judgment would be carried out upon them, as a warning also for all future generations, no matter where they might be living in the world. The last great visitation of grace for the children had dawned with the coming of the Baptist. Once more and for the last time the hand of sparing mercy stayed the hand of avenging justice which had even now lifted the ax; the people as a whole rejected the Savior, and the ax of God's wrath cut down the unfruitful fig-tree in the vineyard. The final disposition of all those that continue to reject the salvation of Jesus the Christ is the fire of the punishment of hell.34)

Individual counsel to the people: V. 10. **And the people asked him, saying, What shall we do then?** V. 11. **He answereth and saith unto them, He that hath two coats let him impart to him that hath none; and he that hath meat let him do likewise.** V. 12. **Then came also publicans to be baptized, and said unto him, Master, what shall we do?** V. 13. **And he said unto them, Exact no more than that which is appointed you.** V. 14. **And the soldiers likewise demanded of him, saying, And what shall we do? And he said unto them, Do violence to no man, neither accuse any falsely; and be content with your wages.** The preaching of John did not remain without its effect upon the people. Some there were that were struck in their hearts, and who now became perplexed

33) Luther, 12, 1054.
34) Besser, *Bibelstunden*, 1, 117.

penitents. They accepted the rebuke of John in all meekness, they acknowledged their sins, but they were at a loss as to the manner in which they should now give evidence of their change of heart; they needed lessons in sanctification. And so John makes the application of the Law in their individual cases. The great fault of the people in general was their grasping meanness. If they had merely discouraged promiscuous begging due to laziness, they would have acted laudably. But they were mercenary and grasping, and therefore John teaches them that they should be willing to share with the needy, Is. 58, 3—6; Dan. 4, 24. To help the poor with clothing and food is not only well-pleasing to God, but under circumstances may become a matter of duty demanded by the worship of Him, Matt. 10, 42. The publicans also felt the justice of John's general rebuke and submitted the question as they came to be baptized: Teacher, what shall we do? Their sin was covetousness, greed, and therefore overreaching and fraud. To them he gave instructions not to exact payment in excess of the fixed duty. This was a comparatively easy matter for them, since the system permitted graft on a wholesale scale, and it was nothing unusual for a publican to amass a fortune. This they could not continue if their repentance was sincere; a hint to the grafters of our day, not to mention food profiteers and other pirates that ply their trade under the guise of legitimate business. The last class whom John gave special instructions were soldiers, probably such as mixed with the people out of curiosity or were sent down by the authorities in anticipation of trouble. Upon their question as to their proper behavior under the circumstances, John gives them instructions to extort neither by force nor by fraud, by misrepresentation, and to be satisfied with their wages. In the work of their calling, the temptation to bully the people, and to receive bribes and hush-money, was very great, Matt. 28, 12. They extorted money by intimidation in the case of the poor, they obtained money by acting as informers against the rich. John's words were a lesson for each one to consider his own station according to the Law of God.

John's testimony concerning Christ: V. 15. **And as the people were in expectation, and all men mused in their hearts of John whether he were the Christ or not,** v. 16. **John answered, saying unto them all, I indeed baptize you with water; but One mightier than I cometh, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose; He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire;** v. 17. **whose fan is in His hand, and He will throughly purge His floor, and will gather the wheat into His garner; but the chaff He will burn with fire unquenchable.** V. 18. **And many other things in his exhortation preached he unto the people.** V. 19. **But Herod the tetrarch, being reproved by him for Herodias, his brother Philip's wife, and for all the evils which Herod had done,** v. 20. **added yet this above all, that he shut up John in prison.** The fearless testimony of John made a powerful impression upon the people as a whole. The popular expectation and conjecture was that he might be the promised Christ. This opinion was gaining ground very rapidly, with the people debating the question with great vehemence. But when this movement was brought to the attention of John, he promptly opposed and did all he could to suppress its further spread. His statement seems to have been a formal, solemn, public declaration. His baptism was that of a servant carrying out orders: he baptized with water only. He, for whose coming he was preparing the way, would be so much mightier and stronger that John did not feel worthy to perform the lowest service of a slave for Him, that of unstrapping and bearing His sandals. Christ would baptize with the Holy Ghost and with fire. In and through the Gospel He gives to the sinners His Holy Ghost for the renewing of their heart, for the sanctifying of their life. His power would have the purifying, cleansing properties of fire. It would give the sinners strength to do what John demanded, fruits of life worthy of repentance. But woe unto those that refused to accept this Savior with His Holy Ghost. As the husbandman separates the chaff from the wheat by a careful and repeated use of the fan, gathers the wheat into his granary, but burns the useless chaff, so Christ, as the Judge of the world, will deal with those that have been weighed and found wanting, that have the outward appearance and behavior of real believers, but lack true, sanctifying faith. Unquenchable fire in the abyss of hell will be their lot. But while John thus chiefly gave testimony concerning Christ, he spoke many other things to the people, both in the form of exhortation and in the form of pure Gospel-preaching; he did the work of a true evangelist. But he could not continue his work very long without interference. With the frankness of the preacher of truth, he did not hesitate about rebuking Herod, the tetrarch of Galilee, for his adulterous union with Herodias, his niece and the wife of his half-brother Philip (not the tetrarch of the region beyond the Sea of Tiberias). And John's rebuke was not confined to Herod's sin with Herodias, but rather included all his misdeeds, of injustice, cruelty, luxury, etc. And so Herod felt constrained to place John into prison, being content with that for the present. The later developments Luke does not relate. Though the treatment accorded to ministers and confessors of the Gospel may not often reach this climax in our days, the same enmity toward their open confession of the truth and their fearless testimony against falsehood and every form of sin is abroad in our land to-day. As Herod re-

jected the mercy of God and fulfilled the measure of his sins, so many an unbeliever and enemy of Christ is trying to stifle the voice of his conscience by deeds of violence against sincere Christians.

The Baptism and Genealogy of Christ.

Luke 3, 21—38.

The baptism of Jesus: V. 21. **Now, when all the people were baptized, it came to pass that Jesus also being baptized and praying, the heaven was opened,** v. 22. **and the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon Him, and a voice came from heaven, which said, Thou art My beloved Son; in Thee I am well pleased.** When all the people were being baptized, when the ministry of John had reached its climax, Jesus Himself came to be the companion of sinners that were seeking forgiveness of sins through Baptism. Through His baptism, Jesus was formally inaugurated into His office. For after His baptism, while He was praying, as He was wont to do in all the important situations of His life, the heaven above Him was opened. And at the same time, the Holy Spirit, in the bodily form of a dove and as such externally visible, came down from heaven upon Jesus. The entire event was a miraculous witness of God the Father to the Sonship of Jesus, as He also called down in an audible voice: Thou art My Son the beloved, in Thee I am well pleased. It was a manifestation intended for the strengthening of Christ at the beginning of His ministry. In the days which were before Him, it would often seem as though the hand of God were entirely withdrawn from Him, that He no longer had a loving Father in heaven above. But the assurance which He received at His baptism gave Christ the necessary courage, according to His human nature, to meet all the trials which must needs fall to His lot as the great Vicar of mankind. Note that the Triune God is present at this great induction of the Son into His office. "With these words God makes the heart of all the world laughing and happy and transfuses all creatures with the full measure of divine sweetness and comfort. How so? Why, if I know that and am certain that the man Christ is the Son of God and well-pleasing to God, as I must be certain, since the divine Majesty itself speaks from heaven, which cannot lie, then I am also certain that all that this Man says and does is all the word and work of a beloved Son, which must please God in the highest measure. Well, then, that I note and grasp it well: How could God give me more convincing evidence and offer Himself with greater love and sweetness than by saying that it pleases Him from His heart that His Son Christ speaks so pleasantly with me, loves me so cordially, and out of great love for me suffers, dies, and does everything? Thinkest thou not, if a human heart should feel such pleasure of God in Christ when He serves us thus, that for joy it would burst into a hundred thousand pieces? For there it would see the abyss of the fatherly heart, yea, the bottomless and eternal goodness and love of God which He bears toward us and has borne from eternity." 35)

The genealogy of Jesus: V. 23. **And Jesus Himself began to be about thirty years of age, being (as was supposed) the son of Joseph, which was the son of Heli,** v. 24. **which was the son of Matthat, which was the son of Levi, which was the son of Melchi, which was the son of Janna, which was the son of Joseph,** v. 25. **which was the son of Mattathias, which was the son of Amos, which was the son of Naum, which was the son of Esli, which was the son of Nagge,** v. 26. **which was the son of Maath, which was the son of Mattathias, which was the son of Semei, which was the son of Joseph, which was the son of Juda,** v. 27. **which was the son of Joanna, which was the son of Rhesa, which was the son of Zorobbabel, which was the son of Salathiel, which was the son of Neri,** v. 28. **which was the son of Melchi, which was the son of Addi, which was the son of Cosam, which was the son of Elmodam, which was the son of Er,** v. 29. **which was the son of Jose, which was the son of Eliezer, which was the son of Jorim, which was the son of Matthat, which was the son of Levi,** v. 30. **which was the son of Simeon, which was the son of Juda, which was the son of Joseph, which was the son of Jonan, which was the son of Eliakim,** v. 31. **which was the son of Melea, which was the son of Menan, which was the son of Mattatha, which was the son of Nathan, which was the son of David,** v. 32. **which was the son of Jesse, which was the son of Obed, which was the son of Booz, which was the son of Salmon, which was the son of Naasson,** v. 33. **which was the son of Aminadab, which was the son of Aram, which was the son of Esrom, which was the son of Phares, which was the son of Juda,** v. 34. **which was the son of Jacob, which was the son of Isaac, which was the son of Abraham, which was the son of Thara, which was the son of Nachor,** v. 35. **which was the son of Saruch, which was the son of Ragau, which was the son of Phalec, which was the son of Heber, which was the son of Sala,** v. 36. **which was the son of Cainan, which was the son of Arphaxad, which was the son of Sem, which was the son of Noe, which was the son of Lamech,** v. 37. **which was the son of Mathusala, which was the son of Enoch, which was the son of Jared, which was**

35) Luther, quoted in Besser, *Bibelstunden*, 1, 131. 132.

the son of Maleleel, which was the son of Cainan, v. 38. **which was the son of Enos, which was the son of Seth, which was the son of Adam, which was the son of God.** The legal genealogical table of Christ is given by Matthew, 1, 1—17, who takes care to establish an unbroken sequence back to David. We have here the natural genealogical table of Jesus, through His mother Mary. There are no special features in the list, although the names of such men appear as were born of women under a cloud according to Jewish understanding. There were some exceptionally great sinners among the forefathers of Jesus, and, as one commentator remarks, He was numbered with the transgressors even by virtue of His descent from such notorious transgressors. In comparing this list with the Old Testament accounts, it should be remembered that son and son-in-law are used indiscriminately. "The two sons-in-law who are to be noticed in this genealogy are Joseph, the son-in-law of Heli, whose own father was Jacob, Matt. 1, 16; and Salathiel, the son-in-law of Neri, whose own father was Jechonias, 1 Chron. 3, 17; Matt. 1, 12. This remark alone is sufficient to remove all difficulty. Thus it appears that Joseph, son of Jacob, according to St. Matthew, was son-in-law of Heli, according to St. Luke. And Salathiel, son of Jechonias, according to the former, was son-in-law of Neri, according to the latter. Mary therefore appears to have been the daughter of Heli, so called by abbreviation for Heliachim, which is the same in Hebrew with Joachim. Joseph, son of Jacob, and Mary, daughter of Heli, were of the same family: both came from Zerubbabel; Joseph from Abiud, his eldest son, Matt. 1, 13, and Mary by Rhesa, the youngest, v. 27." 36) Of interest is the fact that Luke continues the genealogy of Jesus beyond David to Adam, and thus to God. He thereby emphasizes the universality of the Gospel of this Jesus, the Brother of all men, whose ministry is by no means confined to the Jews, but extends beyond the boundaries of Judea to the ends of the world. Scripture spares no trouble to testify to us that Jesus Christ is true man, descended with us from one blood, and that He is the Savior promised to the patriarchs of the Old Testament, the blessed seed of Abraham, the Shiloh out of the family of Judah, the son out of the house of David, in whom is our one sure trust of salvation.

Summary. *John the Baptist begins his ministry of preaching and baptizing, also of bearing witness of Jesus, whom he baptized before he was imprisoned by Herod the tetrarch; the natural genealogical table of Jesus is given, extending His line back to Adam.*

36) Clarke, *Commentary*, 5, 383. 384.

CHAPTER 4.

The Temptation of Christ. Luke 4, 1—13.

The first temptation: V. 1. **And Jesus, being full of the Holy Ghost, returned from Jordan, and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness,** v. 2. **being forty days tempted of the devil. And in those days He did eat nothing; and when they were ended, He afterward hungered.** V. 3. **And the devil said unto Him, If Thou be the Son of God, command this stone that it be made bread.** V. 4. **And Jesus answered him, saying, It is written, That man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God.** Jesus had received the gift of the Holy Ghost at His baptism in extraordinary measure, Heb. 1, 9. He was not merely enlightened by Him, but, like a vessel, He was full of the Spirit; also according to His human nature, all His thoughts and actions were directed by the Spirit's wonderful power. Not that Christ lost His identity and became a mere puppet, but that He worked with the Spirit that filled Him in full harmony in the work of redemption. It was this Spirit who also led Him, with somewhat urgent insistence, into the wilderness, Mark 1, 12. His human nature faltered often in the days of His flesh, He felt constrained at frequent intervals to seek the strength and comfort of His heavenly Father in prayer. And there is every reason for believing that the temptations of the wilderness were of the nature, if not of the severity, of the Passion in Gethsemane. Out there in the wilderness, without human companionship of any kind, Jesus was subjected to the temptations of Satan, for our sakes. He must meet the champion of the powers of darkness at the very outset of His ministry in order to overcome his cunning and powerful attacks. For forty days Christ was exposed to the onsets of the devil. The three temptations which are narrated here were therefore not the only ones which tended to hinder the work of redemption. What He endured during these forty days is beyond all human conception, for which reason He did not speak to His disciples about those days. Had the devil succeeded in his design, then the human race would have remained in his power in all eternity. But Christ did not suffer Himself to be led away from the path of duty and obedience which He had entered. During these forty days the Lord had had nothing to eat, and therefore He was hungry when they came to an end. He had a true human nature and was subject to the same affections as all men; He felt the need of food keenly. Of this fact the devil tried to take advantage. Putting his question in such a form that he implied doubt

in the Lord's ability to help Himself, he pointed to the stones (collective) and asked Him to change them into bread. The temptation is very subtle; Satan does not want to urge the Lord to doubt the providence of the heavenly Father, but desired Christ, without need or authority, to abuse the power which He possessed as the Son of God for the gratification of the desires of the body. But Satan's cunning was lost upon Jesus, who immediately saw the challenge of the words and countered with a word of Scripture which effectually threw back the attack. He quoted Deut. 8, 3 to him, thus reminding him of a fact which the devil should know very well, which had been demonstrated to him during these forty days, namely, that God is not bound by the ordinary means for establishing and maintaining life. Had His heavenly Father been able to keep Him alive during these forty days, He would also find ways and means to do so for a few more days without any directions from the devil. Note: This should be remembered whenever the care of this life rears its head in a Christian home; God's providence and goodness has never failed yet, nor will it in the future, Ps. 37, 25.

The second temptation: V. 5. **And the devil, taking Him up into an high mountain, showed unto Him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time.** V. 6. **And the devil said unto Him, All this power will I give Thee, and the glory of them; for that is delivered unto me; and to whomsoever I will I give it.** V. 7. **If Thou therefore wilt worship me, all shall be Thine.** V. 8. **And Jesus answered and said unto him, Get thee behind Me, Satan; for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord, thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve.** This temptation, in the chronological sequence, is really the third. Luke narrates the three in a different order, because he has a different climax in mind, that of the incident on the Temple's roof. The attempt to incite care and worry about the body and its needs in the heart of Jesus had failed. But the devil believed that temporal riches and power would exert an irresistible appeal, if offered at the right moment and with the proper effect. So he took Jesus up very high, to the very summit of a high mountain and, by means of the power which he possesses, he was able to give Jesus a picture of all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time, in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye. The suddenness of the view, coming without preparation or announcement, must have been a wonderful, overwhelming sight: All the riches of the world, the mined and the unmined precious metals, the gems and precious stones with and without their setting of the appropriate foils; all the power of the many rulers, kings, emperors, princes wherever governments had been established, among all races, peoples, and nations. And then came the devil's offer: To Thee will I give all this power (Thee emphatic). He asserts that all of the riches and all of the power have been given over to him, and that he can dispense his favors as he sees fit. But the condition was that Christ should bow down before him, should worship him, should acknowledge Satan as His Lord. To accede to this impudent demand would have put the Son of God into the power of the arch-enemy of mankind. But the Savior was fully equal to the occasion, and once more routed the enemy with a powerful quotation from Scripture, Deut. 6, 13. God is the only object of worship and service. To substitute any creature in heaven or on earth or under the earth for the one God is to commit idolatry. And in the case of Christ it would have been the end of His redemptive ministry.

The third temptation: V. 9. **And he brought Him to Jerusalem, and set Him on a pinnacle of the Temple, and said unto Him, If Thou be the Son of God, cast Thyself down from hence;** v. 10. **for it is written, He shall give His angels charge over thee to keep thee;** v. 11. **and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone.** V. 12. **And Jesus, answering, said unto him, It is said, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord, thy God.** V. 13. **And when the devil had ended all the temptation, he departed from Him for a season.** The attempt to excite care and worry for the body in the mind of Jesus having failed, and an effort to instil cupidity, greed, and ambition for power in His heart having met with equally poor success, Satan endeavors to arouse pride and foolish daring in the Lord. Having brought Him to Jerusalem, therefore, he placed Jesus on the pinnacle of the Temple, probably on the roof of one of the porticoes, from which one could cast a look that made him dizzy, into an incalculable depth, as Josephus relates. Now the cool demand of the devil was that the Lord cast Himself down from there, into the depths of the Kidron Valley, before the eyes of the assembled congregation, who would be sure to rush out of the nearest gates to see how the foolhardy jump had succeeded. The devil's temptation has in reality two objects: Christ should demonstrate His divine Sonship; He should, in this manner, gain a great number of disciples, probably the entire populace, at one bold stroke. The devil even quoted Scripture to accomplish his purpose, Ps. 91, 11. 12, omitting, however, the very essential words "to keep thee *in all thy ways*," which are practically a norm for the proper understanding of the entire passage. Cp. Matt. 4, 5—7. But Jesus was fully equal to the occasion. Without going into the matter of falsifying Scripture in his own interest, He tells the devil that there is a passage which reads: Thou shalt not tempt the Lord, thy God, Deut. 6, 16. Any attempt to reach the ground below by any means outside of those suggested by a correct understanding of nature's laws would be a chal-

lenging of God's protective care, for which there is no promise in the Bible. Note: In a similar way, the devil is always attempting to make us presumptuous, daring, foolhardy, without the promise and command of God. It is the pride of our hearts which he intends to incite, together with the feeling that we are in no need of God's protective care. But the one effective way of meeting all the attacks of the Evil One and vanquishing him quickly and surely is to use the words of Scripture as weapons of defense and offense. Before these powerful onslaughts the devil must give way and be routed completely.

The Lord had remained victorious in all three temptations. The devil had not so much as made a dent in His defense. And so, for the time being at least, Satan was obliged to depart. But this withdrawal was, as the evangelist expressly states, only temporary. There was too much at stake for the devil for him to give up all endeavors to foil the work of redemption. During the entire time of Christ's public ministry, but especially during the days of His last great Passion, the devil used every means in his power to overcome the Son of God, who thus was obliged to be on the alert all the time, always ready to thrust and to parry, as occasion offered.

The Beginning of Christ's Ministry and His Teaching in Nazareth. Luke 4, 14—32.

The return to Galilee: V. 14. **And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee; and there went out a fame of Him through all the region round about.** V. 15. **And He taught in their synagogs, being glorified of all.** The evangelist has here omitted a part of the gospel-story, probably that related John 2. For he writes that Jesus turned back into Galilee, where He had been before. In the power of the Spirit, who was with Him and took an active part in His ministry, He made this journey which meant the public beginning of the work in which He spent the last years of His life. He had been known before in the section of Galilee near Cana, where He had performed His first miracle, and therefore at this time the news concerning Him went out and spread throughout the neighborhood. It preceded Him wherever He went, it made the people eager to see and hear Him. And He took up His work of bringing the Gospel to His countrymen; He taught in their synagogs, He tried to impart the great lessons of the coming of the kingdom of God. And He was highly praised by all, for all felt the power of His preaching, of whom at least some acknowledged the divinity of His mission.

The visit to Nazareth: V. 16. **And He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up; and, as His custom was, He went into the synagog on the Sabbath-day, and stood up for to read.** V. 17. **And there was delivered unto Him the book of the prophet Esaias. And when He had opened the book, He found the place where it was written,** v. 18. **The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me because He hath anointed Me to preach the Gospel to the poor; He hath sent Me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised,** v. 19. **to preach the acceptable year of the Lord.** In the course of the Galilean travels Jesus came to Nazareth. This little town in the hills of Galilee, situated on the brow of a hill, had been His home for almost thirty years. There He had been brought up; there He had received His education, at least in large part; there He had worked at His trade of carpenter, together with His foster-father Joseph. Now He came in a new capacity, as a teacher or rabbi. When the Sabbath came, He followed His usual custom of going to the synagog. Note: If Jesus felt the need of regular attendance at church services, it is much more necessary for us to make it a habit to be at church every Sunday and whenever His Word is taught. On the Sabbath of which our text speaks the Lord was present as usual. According to the order of services, the reading of the Law had been done. Next in order came the reading from the prophets. Now the Lord arose to read. It was a courtesy which was willingly granted any visiting rabbis that they could read one of the lessons and append to that reading a few remarks in explanation. This was the *meamar*, or talk, which served instead of the sermon. When Jesus arose, the servant of the synagog took out of the ark, or case, in which the sacred writings were kept the roll of parchment on which the prophecies of Isaiah were written. It was a long, narrow strip, fastened at either end to an ornamental rod. As the reading was continued, the parchment was rolled up at the one end and unrolled at the other, only a small space of the written text being visible between the two end rolls, from which space the reader slowly read the Hebrew, which was at once translated into the Aramaic. As Jesus now rolled the parchment apart after the manner just described, He came, either by deliberate choice, or according to the due course of the reading of the lesson of the day, to the text Is. 61, 1. 2. It was a text which was eminently fitting for an introductory sermon, for it described so exactly the work of the Messiah. The Spirit of the Lord rests upon Jesus, because He has been anointed with the Holy Ghost without measure. He is Jesus the Christ, the Messiah, the Anointed One, Acts 10, 38. The preaching of the Gospel is His characteristic work, Is. 48, 16. To the poor He preaches the Gospel, to those that feel the depth and hopelessness of their spiritual poverty; with Christ they will find the true riches that last throughout eternity. Jesus has been sent to heal those whose hearts were broken, that felt the wounds

of sin with painful vividness, with the balm of Gilead, the Gospel of healing. To preach to the captives deliverance, to those that were held bound by the power of sin and the fear of the devil; He cuts the cords and breaks the fetters with which the enemies have held the souls in their power. He gives sight to the blind, that their eyes may no longer be held in the darkness of unbelief; He grants the liberty of the children of God to those that were violently abused, that were slaves of their own lusts as they were led. And all of this together meant for all men the acceptable year of the Lord. As when the harvesters rejoice when the last sheaves are safely stored away, so the Lord of mercy is delighted when His harvest is bountiful. It is a year of rejoicing for His Church, Lev. 25, 10, the year in which all debts of sins and trespasses are remitted, in which all the goods of God's heritage, which were lost through sin, are recovered, Is. 49, 8. "That is His kingdom, that is His office, that we might not be conquered by death, by sin, by the Law, but that He helps us against them that they may also be overcome in us, not by our strength, but through the power of Christ, who triumphs in us through His Word." 37)

The sermon and its effect: V. 20. **And He closed the book, and He gave it again to the minister, and sat down. And the eyes of all them that were in the synagog were fastened on Him.** V. 21. **And He began to say unto them, This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears.** V. 22. **And all bare Him witness, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth. And they said, Is not this Joseph's son?** When Jesus had finished the reading of the lesson, He rolled the parchment together again and then returned it to the servant of the synagog, who had charge of the sacred books. The Scriptures were very precious in those days, and every synagog took the best care of its copies. He then sat down. During the reading of the Scripture-lesson, both the congregation and the reader stood. But during the talk, or sermon, the speaker as well as the audience were seated. His reading and His entire bearing had made such an impression upon all those present that all eyes were fixed upon Him in anxious expectation. Their interest had been aroused. Luke gives only the topic or the beginning of the Lord's discourse: To-day is fulfilled this scripture in your ears. That is the gist of the sermon: He that spoke these words through Isaiah, He stands to-day, at this moment, before your eyes; the promised Messiah has stepped into your midst. And then He surely invited them to come to Him with meek and contrite hearts, in order that the Scripture might be fulfilled not only in their ears, but also in their hearts. Repentance and forgiveness of sins the Lord preached. The effect of Christ's sermon is shown in the words: They bore witness to Him and were surprised at the words of grace which issued from His mouth. The confession was wrung from them, though they were reluctant at first about making the concession. The words about the grace of God whereby the prophecy of Isaiah was fulfilled came upon them as a surprise: they had not known that so much beauty was contained in the Old Testament. But that the admission was made very grudgingly in the majority of cases, appears from the question which passed around among the audience: Is not this man the son of Joseph? Cp. Mark 6, 2. 3. The jealousy of small souls came to the foreground, feeling constrained to spoil the effect of the words of grace.

The rebuke of Christ: V. 23. **And He said unto them, Ye will surely say unto Me this proverb, Physician, heal Thyself; whatsoever we have heard done in Capernaum, do also here in Thy country.** V. 24. **And He said, Verily I say unto you, No prophet is accepted in his own country.** V. 25. **But I tell you of a truth, many widows were in Israel in the days of Elias, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, when great famine was throughout all the land;** v. 26. **but unto none of them was Elias sent save unto Sarepta, a city of Sidon, unto a woman that was a widow.** V. 27. **And many lepers were in Israel in the time of Eliseus the prophet; and none of them was cleansed saving Naaman the Syrian.** Even now prejudice and rejection were raising their heads in the minds of the people of Nazareth; they were refusing in their hearts to believe Him to be the Messiah of the prophets. And Jesus read their thoughts and intentions; He anticipated their attack. They were not satisfied with preaching, but had a proverbial saying in mind: Physician, heal thyself. They had heard that Jesus had done great miracles at Capernaum and elsewhere, and they believed that miracles of healing, like charity, should begin at home. They wanted concrete evidence of His ability, if they were to believe. They met Him from the start with skeptic, unbelieving hearts. And Jesus, reading these thoughts, solemnly declared to them, what He repeated upon various occasions, that no prophet is acceptable in his own country. His own countrymen, his own fellow-citizens, are the most critical, the most skeptical, and the first to condemn. If the people of Nazareth had met the Lord with an open mind, ready to be convinced by word and deed, as other communities had been, then Jesus would have been more than willing to convince them. But here He is forced to draw a parallel between the present situation and two incidents recorded in the Old Testament. Emphatically He declares that there were many widows in the country at the time of Elijah of old, during

37) Luther, quoted in Besser, *Bibelstunden*, I, 164.

the great famine, and yet Elijah was sent only to the town of Sarepta, or Zarephath, to a widow that lived there, 1 Kings 17. And many lepers lived in Israel at the time of Elisha, and yet only Naaman the Syrian was cleansed, 2 Kings 5. Here was a lesson and a warning. The Jews of old might also have said with regard to these strangers, one a Sidonian, the other a Syrian: Why did the prophets not perform these miracles among their own country-people? Just as those prophets, with whom the Lord, in His humility, places Himself on a level, could not work among the Jews on account of the latters' unbelief, so the people of Nazareth, that had the help at their very doors, closed and hardened their hearts against the influence of the preaching of Jesus. They would, therefore, have no one to blame but themselves if condemnation would come upon them.

The attempt to kill the Lord: V. 28. **And all they in the synagog, when they heard these things, were filled with wrath,** v. 29. **and rose up, and thrust Him out of the city, and led Him unto the brow of the hill whereon their city was built, that they might cast Him down headlong.** V. 30. **But He, passing through the midst of them, went His way,** v. 31. **and came down to Capernaum, a city of Galilee, and taught them on the Sabbath-days.** V. 32. **And they were astonished at His doctrine; for His word was with power.** Up to this point the congregation had listened to Jesus, though with growing indignation, since He dared to expose and flay their national vice, their self-righteous pride. But now their indignation, which filled them to overflowing, carried all reason and common sense before it. The entire population shared in the movement. Rising up, they cast Him out of the synagog, out of the city. And then they deliberately laid hold upon Him and led Him to a precipice of the hill on which their city was built, a place where there was a steep, sheer drop into the valley below, their intention being to throw Him down bodily. Theirs was the action of people that have lost all semblance of calm reasoning, whom insane wrath has deprived of the ability to think right and to consider the consequences, a typical mob, such as are the rule to this day under similar circumstances. As long as faithful pastors speak in a general way in their preaching and admonishing, they have peace and are even praised. But if the same men dare to point to individual sins, they are accused of unjust criticism and condemnation. For it is a peculiarity of the truth that it embitters and makes enemies where it does not work conversion. There is no worse censure for a pastor than that which was spoken of one concerning his position in his congregation: We do not hurt him, and he does not hurt us. But the mob, in Christ's case, did not realize its murderous intention, though they received evidence of the supernatural power of the Lord. For He quietly passed through their midst and went His way. Whether He rendered Himself invisible for the time being, or whether they were struck with blindness, or whether their arms were paralyzed by a power above them, is not stated. It was not merely the power of a tranquil spirit and a firm will over human passions, but the almighty power of the Son of God that stayed their hands.

Jesus went down from the hill country to the city of Capernaum, which He made His headquarters during His Galilean ministry. Here He made it a habit to teach in the synagogs on the Sabbath-days, for the preaching of the Gospel of salvation was the first and principal part of His work. And wherever He taught, the effect of His words was the same: people were astonished almost to stupefaction over His doctrine, which differed so radically from the vapid discourses of the average rabbi, and in authority and power His word went out. There was not only the force of conviction behind it, but the merciful power of God which is in the means of grace and gives them their efficacy. Note: Luke always adds the geographical references for the sake of his readers, who were unacquainted with the location of the various towns which are mentioned in the Gospel story.

Healing of a Demoniac and Other Miracles.

Luke 4, 33—44.

The healing of the demoniac at Capernaum: V. 33. **And in the synagog there was a man which had a spirit of an unclean devil, and cried out with a loud voice,** v. 34. **saying, Let us alone; what have we to do with Thee, Thou Jesus of Nazareth? Art Thou come to destroy us? I know Thee who Thou art; the Holy One of God.** V. 35. **And Jesus rebuked him, saying, Hold thy peace, and come out of him. And when the devil had thrown him in the midst, he came out of him, and hurt him not.** V. 36. **And they were all amazed, and spake among themselves, saying, What a word is this! for with authority and power He commandeth the unclean spirits, and they come out.** V. 37. **And the fame of Him went out into every place of the country round about.** Matthew commonly speaks of these unfortunates whom we meet in this passage as demoniacs, Mark as people with unclean spirits. The man was possessed of a devil, who worked in the body to harm him. He was evidently not always violent, otherwise the man could hardly have come to the synagog service. But in the course of the morning worship the sick man had an attack, the evil spirit took possession of his members. He screamed with a loud voice, whether from aversion, or horror, or wrath, or fear, or from them all together. The devil knows the Lord, and his words were a revelation concerning Him. He knows His name: Jesus; he knows whence He

hails: of Nazareth; he knows Him to be the true Son of God, the Holy One of God, of equal majesty and power with the Father. He wants nothing to do with Jesus, for he fears lest the last destruction will be meted out to him and all his companions at once. Mark well: The devil is a mighty spirit and, together with his angels, can work a great deal of harm, if God permits it. The evil spirits are busily engaged in hurting the souls and the bodies of men wherever this is possible, and they are working with all speed, since they fear the Judgment Day, which will bring to them the final confirmation and the consummation of their eternal damnation. But Jesus earnestly rebuked the evil spirit because of his words. He wants no confession and proclaiming of His name and power from these spirits of darkness. Not by the revelation of devils, but by the preaching of the Gospel people should learn to know Him. The Lord bade him keep silence, and also come out from the man, from the victim of his spite. The spirit had to obey, but in doing so, he took the last opportunity to wrench the poor man in a frightful manner, throwing him down in the midst of the synagog. But beyond that he could not hurt him; Jesus would not permit it. But the effect upon the congregation was such as to throw a stupor upon them all. They were inclined to doubt the evidence of their own eyes and ears. To hear a man speak words of command, with power and authority, lay down the law to unclean, evil spirits and receive unquestioned obedience, was an entirely new thing in their experience; it filled them with something like horrified reverence. But they thought of promises like Is. 49, 24. 25, and were soon busily engaged in spreading the news of this deed to every town of the entire neighborhood. The miracle was a proof that Jesus was indeed the Holy One of God, and that He had come to destroy the works of the devil and to deliver men from the bonds of Satan.

The healing of Peter's mother-in-law: V. 38. **And He arose out of the synagog, and entered into Simon's house. And Simon's wife's mother was taken with a great fever; and they besought Him for her.** V. 39. **And He stood over her, and rebuked the fever; and it left her; and immediately she arose and ministered unto them.** From the synagog Jesus went directly to the home of Simon Peter, of whose call Luke tells in the next chapter. Having lived at Bethsaida formerly, Simon had moved to Capernaum, where he lived with his family, to which the mother of his wife belonged. Evidently, Scripture knows nothing of the foolish unkindness which is now so commonly shown to those to whom reverence and honor is due. This aged woman, at any rate, must have been esteemed very highly in the house of her son-in-law, for when she was prostrated with a fever, severely afflicted with the severity of the attack, they, the members of the family, made intercession for her to Jesus. The Lord immediately signified His willingness. Stepping to the cot on which she was lying, He raised Himself in the fulness of His majesty, He threatened the fever, and it obeyed His voice. The healing was immediate and complete. If in any family some one becomes a disciple of Jesus, there is a path between that house and heaven, guarded by angels. Not only in temporal things, but especially in spiritual matters blessings will attend such a house where a faithful soul prays. And the subsequent serving of the mother-in-law of Peter after healing shows that the beautiful, but rare plant of gratitude flourished in that house.[38])

Cures on the Sabbath evening: V. 40. **Now when the sun was setting, all they that had any sick with divers diseases brought them unto Him; and He laid His hands on every one of them, and healed them.** V. 41. **And devils also came out of many, crying out, and saying, Thou art Christ, the Son of God. And He, rebuking them, suffered them not to speak; for they knew that He was Christ.** With the setting of the sun the Sabbath was over, and therefore all Sabbath commands no longer binding. It was then that people, as many of them as had sick relatives and friends that were afflicted with any diseases, began to lead and to carry them to Jesus. The miracle of the morning had convinced them that they had a powerful Healer in their midst, and they were only too willing to take advantage of that fact. Jesus had compassion upon them: upon every one of the sick He laid His hands and thus cured them. What purpose the Lord had in mind in permitting Himself to be imposed upon with all this wholesale healing is shown by Matthew, 8, 17. The one greatest disease, which the Lord has taken upon Himself and borne, is sin; all sickness, all evil, comes from sin, is a punishment of sin. When Jesus therefore laid His hands upon any sick person, it implied: Thou art a sinner, I am the Savior of sinners; I take the curse and consequence of sin from thee, let this be an admonition to thee to abstain from the service of sin. At the same time, demons came out from those possessed at the very presence of Jesus, screaming loudly and revealing the Lord's identity as the Christ. But these revelations Jesus stopped summarily, since He desires no praise and confession from the devil nor from all those that have placed themselves in the service of the devil.

The withdrawal of Jesus: V. 42. **And when it was day, He departed and went into a desert place; and the people sought Him, and came unto Him, and stayed Him that He should not depart from them.** V. 43. **And He said unto them, I must preach the kingdom of God to other cities also; for therefor am I sent.** V. 44. **And He preached**

38) Besser, *Bibelstunden*, 1, 180.

in the synagogs of Galilee. The very next morning, at break of day, Jesus left Capernaum. He followed the method He employed at other times also: He went out into the solitude to be all alone in prayer and communion with His heavenly Father. It would be of advantage to most Christians if they would occasionally withdraw from the bustle of modern business and spend some time after the example of Christ. We are too liable to lose our balance and the sense of proportion according to Biblical standards if there is only the ceaseless hurry of work, alternating with rounds of pleasure. Sunday should be the day for quiet communion with God, not spent in contempt of God's Word and in loud and boisterous picnics, but in prayerful contemplation of our need of God. But the absence of Jesus was soon noticed, and a large multitude of people, with Peter in the lead, went out to search for Him and bring Him back. But He would not be persuaded by them. He knew that it was not the Word of Life for which they were eager, but the miracles which they hoped to see. And so He explained to them the principal purpose of His ministry. The obligation rests upon Him to bring the Gospel news of the kingdom of God to other cities also. This work He has taken upon Himself; in this work He wants to show all faithfulness. And so He departed on a preaching tour of Galilee, Himself proclaiming the Gospel-message in His sermons in the synagogs of Galilee.

Summary. *Jesus, in the wilderness, is tempted of the devil, begins His Galilean ministry, teaches in Nazareth, where the people try to kill Him, and at Capernaum heals a demoniac and other sick people.*

CHAPTER 5.

The Miraculous Draught of Fishes and the Call of the First Disciples. Luke 5, 1—11.

Preaching on the shore of the sea: V. 1. **And it came to pass that, as the people pressed upon Him to hear the Word of God, He stood by the Lake of Gennesaret,** v. 2. **and saw two ships standing by the lake; but the fishermen were gone out of them, and were washing their nets.** V. 3. **And He entered into one of the ships, which was Simon's, and prayed him that he would thrust out a little from the land. And He sat down, and taught the people out of the ship.** Jesus had left the city of Capernaum on a certain day, with the intention of walking along the shore of the lake, Matt. 4, 18; Mark 1, 16. But it was impossible for Him to avoid the crowds that gathered whenever His presence was announced by some one that saw Him. Here a multitude pressed upon Him, whose eagerness for the Word of God is mentioned. They wanted to hear this man speak that preached with such authority. If they had but been as eager for the salvation which He offered in His preaching! Jesus was standing on the shore of the lake, but the growing crowds were hemming Him in on all sides, making it impossible for Him to address the people in an effective manner. As He then looked around for some way of meeting the situation, He saw two fishing-boats standing along the shore. They may just have come in and had barely been fastened by the fishermen who, after having disembarked, were washing their nets. Jesus, having known the men before, did not hesitate to enter into one of the two boats, the one belonging to Simon. He then asked the owner to put out to some distance, a matter of a rod or so, from the shore. And then, having sat down, Jesus taught the people from the boat. From this elevated position He had command of the audience and could speak to all of them without difficulty. Jesus was ever ready and eager to preach the Gospel of the salvation of mankind. Not only in the schools, but out under the open sky, wherever He stood or walked and had opportunity of any kind, He preached the Word of God. God's Word fits in all places and at all times. Nothing is more necessary for men, nothing more urgent than the preaching of the Word.

The miraculous draught: V. 4. **Now when He had left speaking, He said unto Simon, Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught.** V. 5. **And Simon, answering, said unto Him, Master, we have toiled all the night and have taken nothing; nevertheless at Thy word I will let down the net.** V. 6. **And when they had this done, they inclosed a great multitude of fishes; and their net brake.** V. 7. **And they beckoned unto their partners, which were in the other ship, that they should come and help them. And they came and filled both the ships, so that they began to sink.** The discourse of the Lord may have taken up the greater part of the forenoon. But now He made a pause in His speaking, and addressed Simon, who was probably at the helm, with a peculiar request, which sounded like an arbitrary demand. Peter should launch out far, he should take his boat out to the place where the sea was deep, away from the shore. These first words were addressed to Peter alone, as the master of the vessel; but the second part, describing the manner of taking the fish, is directed to all the men in the boat. Jesus thus took charge of the boat and directed its disposal, as though He were the owner. It was a test of Peter's faith and trust in the Lord. The answer of Simon indicated the greatest respect for the Man who thus unceremoniously

took charge of his affairs. He calls Him Master, the Greek word being used of a prefect or of one that is set over certain persons or affairs, a title of respect which did not imply a personal relation. He does not register an objection, but merely states as a fact that they have worked hard all night and have caught nothing. They had plied their trade at the time and under the conditions which experience had shown them to be the most favorable, at night, and on the benches of the lake not far from the shore. But all his fisherman's experience and theory Peter is willing to bring as a sacrifice to his faith in the words of Jesus. There are several lessons to note here. "Therefore thou must learn these things well that thou mayest work and hope, even if He should delay the matter for some time; for though He lets thee wait and labor in perspiration, and thou thinkest thy work is lost, yet thou must be prudent and learn to know thy God and to trust in Him. . . . For we see in this gospel how God cares for them that are His, and keeps them both in body and soul. If we but get to the point that we freely trust Him, then things cannot be wanting, then God pours us full of bodily and spiritual goods, and with such an abounding treasure that we may help all people. That surely means making the poor people rich and feeding the hungry." 39) Luther also shows that disappointments and failures in the work of our calling should not discourage us entirely, whether it be in the training of children, if we have but been faithful, or in positions of authority, or in the government of the Church. "And, to summarize, the entire human being and life is constituted thus, that one must often have worked long and much for nothing, until God finally gives the increase; and therefore the work shall not be omitted, nor any person found without work, but expect the increase and blessing from God, when He wants to give it, Eccl. 11, 6." 40)

Simon's faith was richly rewarded. For when they followed the directions of Jesus, their net enclosed a great quantity of fish, and it began to tear. Pulling with all their might, they had no breath to waste in calling, so they anxiously waved to their companions in the other boat that they should come and help them. And so great was the catch that both boats were filled with fish to such a point that there was danger of their sinking under the load; they were all but submerged. It was such an obvious miracle that they all were astounded.

The call of Simon: V. 8. **When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord.** V. 9. **For he was astonished, and all that were with him, at the draught of the fishes which they had taken;** v. 10. **and so was also James and John, the sons of Zebedee, which were partners with Simon. And Jesus said unto Simon, Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men.** V. 11. **And when they had brought their ships to land, they forsook all and followed Him.** Peter was most deeply affected by the miracle, of which he had been not merely a spectator, but a partaker and recipient. It was the first time that Peter had been brought so close to the almighty power of Christ that he could judge as to its greatness and majesty. It belonged to his calling, it took place on his vessel, with his own fish-net, after his own fruitless endeavors, in his immediate presence. And so he utters his cry of confession and faith: Depart from me! This evidence of the almighty power of Jesus was evidence of His divinity. And the divine Christ is a holy, sinless Christ. Peter felt too utterly unworthy to remain any longer in the presence of the Master, before whom he always felt his sinfulness. For a stupor had fallen upon him, so great was his astonishment. And the others of the party that were Simon's partners in the fishing business were in the same condition. They almost feared to trust the evidence of their senses. They were also seized with fear, which encompassed them, especially James and John, the sons of Zebedee. But Jesus addressed a special word of comfort to Peter, bidding him not to fear. And they all from henceforth should be fishers of men. This should be their permanent occupation; their life should be spent in casting forth the net of the Gospel and drawing redeemed hearts into the kingdom of Christ. "As though He should say: Now thou hast a calling that thou art a fisherman, but I want to command a different one to thee, that thou shalt go into a different water and catch people, make the heaven full of fish, and fill My kingdom in the same way as these fish now fill thy boat. For this draught I will give thee a different net, namely, the Gospel; with that thou shalt catch the elect that they permit themselves to be baptized, believe, and live eternally." 41) The call of Jesus was an effectual call. They brought their ships to the land, and, leaving all, they followed Him. They were formally enrolled as His disciples. When Christ calls and shows the way to His service, there must be no consulting with flesh and blood, but a cheerful following of His voice and a happy bowing under His will. There can be no doubt as to the blessing that attends such obedience.

The Healing of a Leper and of a Paralytic.

Luke 5, 12—26.

Healing a leper: V. 12. **And it came to pass when He was in a certain city, behold, a man full of leprosy, who, seeing Jesus, fell on his face and besought Him, saying,**

39) Luther, 11, 1309. 1313.
40) Luther, 11, 1323.

41) Luther, quoted in Stoeckhardt, *Biblische Geschichte des Neuen Testaments*, 50.

Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean. V. 13. **And He put forth His hand, and touched him, saying, I will; be thou clean. And immediately the leprosy departed from him.** V. 14. **And He charged him to tell no man; but go and show thyself to the priest, and offer for thy cleansing, according as Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them.** V. 15. **But so much the more went there a fame abroad of Him; and great multitudes came together to hear, and to be healed by Him of their infirmities.** Luke does not, as a rule, tell the Gospel-stories in the order in which they happened, except in a general way. This usually, as here, appears from the words with which he introduces the story. Jesus was at one time in one of the little cities of Galilee, where there was a man full of leprosy. The loathsome disease had reached its full virulence in his case, and he was suffering in proportion. When this poor man saw Jesus, he fell down upon his face in the attitude of abject supplication, as an unworthy slave might ask a favor of a mighty king. His earnest prayer was a model for all times. For, since he is asking for a temporal gift, for a thing concerning this life only, he makes no demand, he sets no time, but places the fulfilment entirely in the hands of Jesus: Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean. It is a prayer in the form of a statement, the strongest possible form. It throws the burden upon the Lord and pleads more effectively than a delineation of symptoms could possibly do. And since the matter was left to the will of the Lord, the Lord chooses to exercise that will and the almighty power behind that will in hearing the prayer of the sick man: I will, be thou cleansed. And the almighty words had the effect that the Lord intended: the leprosy immediately departed from the man. Jesus then gave him the earnest order not to speak of the matter, but above all to hurry to the priest, in order that the latter might make the proper declaration of cleanness, and accept the sacrifices which were prescribed at such a time, Lev. 14. The Lord did not want the matter published abroad, in order that the news might not reach the priest before the former leper arrived and a spiteful examination refused to declare him clean. And Jesus at all times wanted the people to understand that the miracles were only secondary manifestations of His ministry, His chief work being the preaching of the Gospel. But the word concerning this miracle done to the leper went out all the more, with the usual result. Great crowds gathered to hear Him and also to be healed of their sicknesses, the latter reason being the more urgent for their coming to Jesus. But Jesus took the first opportunity that presented itself, and retired for prayer and spiritual communion: V. 16. **And He withdrew Himself into the wilderness and prayed.** He asked and received strength from His heavenly Father to carry on His work according to the divine will. This constant communication with God was the secret of His being able to perform so much work; a hint that might well be applied in the case of all His followers.

The healing of the paralytic: V. 17. **And it came to pass on a certain day, as He was teaching, that there were Pharisees and doctors of the law sitting by, which were come out of every town of Galilee and Judea and Jerusalem; and the power of the Lord was present to heal them.** V. 18. **And, behold, men brought in a bed a man which was taken with a palsy; and they sought means to bring him in, and to lay him before Him.** V. 19. **And when they could not find by what way they might bring him in because of the multitude, they went upon the housetop, and let him down through the tiling with his couch into the midst before Jesus.** V. 20. **And when He saw their faith, He said unto him, Man, thy sins are forgiven thee.** V. 21. **And the scribes and the Pharisees began to reason, saying, Who is this which speaketh blasphemies? Who can forgive sins but God alone?** The first indication of the systematic effort on the part of the leaders of the Jewish Church to persecute and discredit Jesus. The story is an independent incident, having no connection with the foregoing, since Luke has no interest in exact chronological sequence. The chief men of the Jewish nation had received full information of the preaching and of the miracles of this otherwise unknown Galilean rabbi, who had not so much as asked their sanction for His work. The local men, of the various synagogs of Galilee, the experts in the Law and in all the doctrines as they had been fixed by tradition, were not equal to the situation. So they were reenforced by men from Judea, and especially from Jerusalem, Pharisees and scribes, the most learned men and skilled in the Law. All these were present in a house where Jesus was teaching the multitude. Not that they were eager for the Word of Life, but that they were watching for some opportunity of accusing Him. And the power of the Lord, the omnipotent majesty of the Triune God, was present in Jesus to the intent that He should heal. The other persons of the Godhead were never mere disinterested or neutral onlookers while the work of redemption was going on, but the entire Godhead in its three persons wrought the salvation of mankind. The chance for which the Pharisees and teachers of the Law had been waiting presented itself very quickly. Certain men bore upon a couch or hammock a man that had suffered a stroke of paralysis. "Commonly those who are attacked in all their members by severe nervous debility are quickly taken away; if not, they live, it is true, but seldom recover their health, and for the most part drag on a miserable life, losing, moreover, their memory. The sickness of those

who are partially affected is, it is true, never severe, but often long and almost incurable." When these men with their burden reached the house where Jesus was staying, they anxiously sought a way in which they might bring the sick man and lay him before Jesus, for that was the purpose of their coming. They had the conviction of faith that this prophet from Nazareth was the Christ, who could easily cure their friend. But the crowd in the house and before the door was too densely packed; it was impossible to find an opening through which they might wedge themselves into the room where Jesus was speaking. But they were not long at a loss as to further procedure. They climbed the outside stairway to the roof of the house, they took off some of the tiles or material of which the roof was made, and then lowered the sick man on his hammock before the feet of Jesus. Luke's account is influenced by his desire to make the manner of performing this work of love clear to the Romans for whom he was writing. Jesus paused in His teaching at this interruption, and His omniscient gaze swept the faces of the newcomers, including that of the sick man. In every one He read the firm conviction as to His ability to help, and also a voiceless pleading and interceding that He would show mercy. He was satisfied with the results of His scrutiny, and therefore turned to the paralytic with the words: Man, forgiven are thy sins! Note: Sin is the cause of all misery, sickness, and death in the world. By removing the cause, the consequences were, in effect, taken away. The sick man's faith knew this; he knew that the greatest earthly gift became his by these comforting words of Jesus. It was not a case of special punishment for special sins, but one in which the Savior knew where the healing must commence, in the soul. No sooner had Jesus uttered the words of forgiveness than the scribes and Pharisees began to reason, to discuss the matter, either in their hearts only, or in an undertone among themselves. Their Pharisaic conscience was deeply grieved that any one presumed upon remitting sins. Such arrogance they must brand as blasphemy; for surely no one could forgive sins but God only. If Jesus were not God, He could not forgive sins in His own power; and His arrogating this authority to Himself would have been blasphemy against God, in the proper sense of the word. But that these scribes and Pharisees might have the fullest and most absolute proof of His divine power and Godhead, He now worked in their presence three miracles, all of which could be done only by an omniscient and omnipotent Being. These miracles were: the remission of the sick man's sins; the revelation of the secret thoughts of the scribes; the restoration of the paralytic in a moment to perfect health.

The miracle: V. 22. **But when Jesus perceived their thoughts, He, answering, said unto them, What reason ye in your hearts? V. 23. Whether is easier, to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Rise up and walk? V. 24. But that ye may know that the Son of Man hath power upon earth to forgive sins, (He said unto the sick of the palsy,) I say unto thee, Arise, and take up thy couch, and go into thine house. V. 25. And immediately he rose up before them, and took up that whereon he lay, and departed to his own house, glorifying God. V. 26. And they were all amazed, and they glorified God, and were filled with fear, saying, We have seen strange things today.** Jesus, in His omniscience, read their thoughts as easily as though they had spoken aloud, and answered in that sense, promptly calling them to account for their condemnation of His words. He proposes a question to them as to what they believed to be easier, to say: Forgiven be thy sins; or to say: Arise and walk. The scribes and Pharisees naturally thought that the saying of the former would be the easier, since the fulfilment lay in the spiritual field and could therefore not be seen or controlled by men. That this miracle of mercy really happened at the word of Jesus they did not believe. The Lord therefore performed before their eyes what they considered the more difficult, for a testimony unto them, incidentally proving that His words to the sick man could not have been blasphemy. The fact that He, the Son of Man, actually possessed the power on earth to forgive sins, He demonstrated by saying to the paralytic: To thee I say, Arise, and pick up thy hammock, or couch, and go to thy house. And without delay, at once, the sick man got up before them all, took up the bed upon which he had been lying, and went to his home, full of praise toward God for the miracle of healing performed in his case. His faith and trust had been gloriously vindicated. Christ the Lord has power to forgive sins as the Son of Man. Had God not, in Christ, become man and reconciled the world to Himself, He would have the power to destroy the sinners, but not to save them, since His holiness must be preserved at all costs. And Christ, the Head and Lord of His Church, has given the power to forgive sins to His Church on earth. This is the peculiar church power which Christ has given to His Church on earth, which His servants administer according to His command, John 20, 23. When the absolution is spoken by the minister of the church or by any Christian in comforting his neighbor, then we may gladly believe that such word of forgiveness is spoken down from heaven itself and is the merciful sentence of God upon us. Of this fact the people had an inkling on that occasion in Capernaum. The greatest astonishment took hold of them all, even the Pharisees that hardened their hearts against Jesus feeling something of the power of God in the incident. The people in general glorified God,

being filled also with reverential awe in the presence of such supernatural evidence. Their opinion was that they had seen strange things, such as appeared contrary to the common run and course of nature, wonders which human reason declares to be impossible.

The Call of Levi and the Discourse Concerning Christ's Ministry. Luke 5, 27—39.

The call and the feast of Levi: V. 27. **And after these things He went forth and saw a publican, named Levi, sitting at the receipt of custom; and He said unto Him, Follow Me.** V. 28. **And he left all, rose up, and followed Him.** V. 29. **And Levi made Him a great feast in his own house; and there was a great company of publicans and of others that sat down with them.** V. 30. **But their scribes and Pharisees murmured against His disciples, saying, Why do ye eat and drink with publicans and sinners?** V. 31. **And Jesus answering said unto them, They that are whole need not a physician; but they that are sick.** V. 32. **I came not to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance.** After the healing of the paralytic Jesus left the house and went out to the seashore. On His way, which probably led along the great caravan road toward Damascus, He passed by the booth of a publican, a tax-collector or customs-inspector, by the name of Levi. Not by accident, but by design and with full intention, did the eyes of Jesus rest upon the man busy with his reports and the other business of his calling. Cp. Matt. 9, 9. Levi had very probably heard of Jesus, since the city was full of the talk concerning Him, had even attended some of His discourses in the neighborhood of Capernaum. Jesus spoke only a short sentence in the form of a command: Follow Me! This word decided the fate of Levi. He left everything behind, he turned his back upon his entire former life with all its associations, and followed Jesus. In the thankfulness of his heart Levi now made a feast for the Lord. It was a great feast, and he had it prepared in his own house. The guests, outside of Jesus and His disciples, were Levi's former companions, a multitude of publicans and others, the majority such as were regarded with anything but favor by the proud and self-righteous Pharisees; they were mostly such as had been put out of the synagog, with whom the average strict Jew would have no dealings. But here they were at the feast, reclining on the sofas about the tables. And many of them may have even then known and loved the Savior of sinners, being thankful to Levi for giving them the chance to see and hear more of the Lord. The fact that Jesus accepted an invitation into such a mixed assembly again offended the scribes and Pharisees of the Jews. The contrast between the teachings and methods of Jesus and those of the Jewish Church leaders was becoming more and more evident. The latter expressed their disapproval of the whole affair in no uncertain terms by remarking to the disciples of Jesus, probably with the intention of alienating them from the Master: For what reason do you eat with the publicans and sinners? The point of the question was directed against Jesus, for His disciples would hardly have gone to the feast without Him. They want Him to feel that they resented His disregard of their customs. But Jesus answered for His disciples, by stating in the form of a proverb that the healthy people had no need of a physician, but those that are in a bad way, that are sick. And He explains the proverb for their benefit: Not am I come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance. Mark: Jesus calls Himself a physician of the soul; He represents sin as a disease of the soul; He states that He is come to cure men of this disease; He implies that those that did not feel their sickness, but believed themselves to be well and healthy, had no need of His services on account of that foolish opinion. Those that cared nothing for a Savior of sinners, He calls righteous or healthy; not as though they were exceptions in a world of lost and condemned sinners, for whose salvation He had come into the world, but because they felt no need of His services, because they did not know that they were wretched and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked, Rev. 3, 17; John 9, 41. Only he that acknowledges and knows his sinfulness, that realizes, as Luther says, that he belongs into hell with skin and hair, with body and soul, only he has part in this Savior. If we accept this fact with meek hearts and rely upon it as sacred truth that God is merciful to us for Christ's sake, then we can be delivered from the terrible disease of sin.

A question of fasting: V. 33. **And they said unto Him, Why do the disciples of John fast often, and make prayers, and likewise the disciples of the Pharisees, but Thine eat and drink?** V. 34. **And He said unto them, Can ye make the children of the bride-chamber fast while the bridegroom is with them?** V. 35. **But the days will come when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then shall they fast in those days.** The Pharisees had allies, more or less openly, in the disciples of John. Misunderstanding the austere manner of living of their Master and imitating it in a false way, they believed such conduct necessary for a devout Jew. And therefore some of these, representing both parties, came to Jesus with a question concerning some of these strict observances in frequent fasting and the practise of prayer, which the disciples of the Lord in no way observed. The implication was a laxness of morals and a disregard of the proper customs. Note: Observances of this kind are well enough in themselves, are, as Luther expresses it, a fine outward training. But to ascribe any other power and value to them as works of

merit in the sight of God is foolish, and therefore the attitude of the Pharisees was foolish. Jesus gives His answer in figurative language. He is the Bridegroom; His disciples are the sons of the bridal feast, the best men at the wedding. The time of Christ's sojourn on earth is the wedding-feast. Now it would obviously be altogether wrong for the chief guests at a marriage-feast to give any evidence of mourning, such as fasting. Only joy and happiness should fill their hearts at this time, and find expression in their actions, John 3, 29; Song of Sol. 5, 1. But in the days when the Bridegroom would be taken from them, when Christ would have to enter upon the path of suffering and be taken from them, as to His visible presence, by death, then they would mourn, John 16, 20, then they would give evidence of sorrow.

Proverbial sayings: V. 36. **And He spake also a parable unto them: No man putteth a piece of a new garment upon an old; if otherwise, then both the new maketh a rent, and the piece that was taken out of the new agreeth not with the old.** V. 37. **And no man putteth new wine into old bottles; else the new wine will burst the bottles and be spilled, and the bottles shall perish.** V. 38. **But new wine must be put into new bottles, and both are preserved.** V. 39. **No man also, having drunk old wine, straightway desireth new; for he saith, The old is better.** Here are three parabolic or proverbial sayings by which the Lord intends to teach the Pharisees a much-needed lesson. It is foolish to take a patch of a new dress and attempt to make it hold a rent in an old dress. This effort only makes matters worse; for the new cloth, in shrinking, and in accommodating itself to the fit of the dress, draws the threads of the rotten, weak part of the garment, and the matter is made far worse. Besides, the new patch, with its clear colors, stands out too prominently from the old dress, making the patch all the more conspicuous. To put new wine, that has not yet stopped fermenting, into old skins, that have lost the power to stretch, is equally foolish, since the new wine will only tear the bottles. Therefore the new wine is properly put only into new bottles, or skins. The old dress is the righteousness of works, in which the Pharisees believed, the new patch the free grace of Jesus. The piety and self-righteousness of the Pharisees and the doctrine which Jesus proclaimed, the doctrine of the free grace of God in the Savior, do not agree and will never fit in the same person's life and behavior. If any one trusts in his own works, and then intends to put a patch of the Gospel upon this self-righteousness, or wants to cover the one or the other transgression with the work and merit of Christ, he will soon find out that this comfort is not reliable. Such a person in the depths of his heart still trusts in his own merit and will be condemned with this unstable comfort. And the new wine is the sweet Gospel of the forgiveness of sins, of the grace of God. This glorious news does not fit into carnal, Pharisaic hearts; if the Gospel is preached to such as still depend upon their own works, it is wasted, for they cannot and will not understand it rightly and receive no benefit from the Gospel. The Gospel requires all hearts to deny all their own righteousness and believe simply in the merits of Jesus the Savior. And finally: A man that has drunk old wine knows its richness and mellowness and therefore does not desire to change for the new, which may be sharper, less agreeable. So dearly did the Pharisees and the disciples of John love their old, accustomed ways that they did not want to change, although the offering of the new doctrine of the Gospel was salvation full and free.

Summary. *Jesus causes the miraculous draught of fishes, calls Simon and his companions, heals a leper, cures a paralytic, calls Levi, and defends Himself and His disciples against Jewish attacks.*

CHAPTER 6.

Disputes Concerning Sabbath Observance.

Luke 6, 1—12.

The Lord of the Sabbath: V. 1. **And it came to pass on the second Sabbath after the first that He went through the corn-fields; and His disciples plucked the ears of corn, and did eat, rubbing them in their hands.** V. 2. **And certain of the Pharisees said unto them, Why do ye that which is not lawful to do on the Sabbath-days?** V. 3. **And Jesus, answering them, said, Have ye not read so much as this what David did when himself was an hungred, and they which were with him,** v. 4. **how he went into the house of God, and did take and eat the show-bread, and gave also to them that were with him, which it is not lawful to eat but for the priests alone?** V. 5. **And He said unto them, That the Son of Man is Lord also of the Sabbath.** It was on the first Sabbath after the second day of Passover that this happened. For on that day the sheaves of the first-fruits of the field were offered to the Lord, and the Jews reckoned the Sabbaths until Pentecost from this day, for which reason the latter festival was known also as the Feast of Weeks. Jesus was walking through the crop, which was now in full ear and ready for cutting. The ancient paths were usually in the nature of short cuts, and were apt to lead across some man's land. But according to ancient custom, no man thought of

plowing these up. The field was tilled on either side of the path, and the grain sometimes encroached on the path, but the path itself belonged to the public. As the Lord was walking along with His disciples, the latter began to pull out spikes of the ripe grain and to rub the ears between the palms of their hands to extract the kernels. This was permitted according to the Law, Deut. 23, 25. But the Pharisees, some of whom were present as usual in order to spy on the Lord, made this innocent act a sin against the Third Commandment, looking upon the pulling of stalks as harvesting and upon the removing of the hulls as threshing and cooking. Note: This attitude is characteristic also of modern sticklers for the so-called sanctity of the Sabbath, or Sunday. Instead of teaching the proper observance of the New Testament holiday according to the sense of the Bible, which Luther has so beautifully expressed in the explanation of the Third Commandment, they suspect base motives and objects in matters which are left absolutely to the decision of Christian liberty. The Pharisees at once attacked the disciples, but always with the point directed against Jesus. They accused them of profaning the Sabbath. Nothing would have pleased them more than if Jesus would have taken up the challenge and argued concerning the fine points of distinction between the various forms of work permitted on the Sabbath. Instead of that, the Lord turns the tables on them by challenging their knowledge of Scriptures. His words, not unmixed with irony, contain a sharp rebuke: Not even this have ye read what David did; have you so little understanding of the Old Testament? His reference is to 1 Sam. 21, 6. There it is related of David that he did indeed go into the house of the Lord, into the tabernacle, which probably stood on the hill between Gibeon and Nobe, and accepted some of the show-bread, the bread of the Lord's countenance, which he then ate with his men, although this bread belonged to the priests only. That was a case of emergency, in which the law of love is always the highest law. The Pharisees should now draw the conclusion from the smaller to the greater. If David had this right and did not sin in taking and eating this bread, then David's Lord must have the right with much greater authority. And if this argument would not be sufficiently strong for them, they should remember that the Son of Man, Christ, the Prophet of Nazareth, is Lord also of the Sabbath. If He chooses to dispense with, or to change, the law with reference to this holiday, it is a matter entirely in His right and power, Col. 2, 16. 17; Rom. 14, 5.

The man with the withered hand: V. 6. **And it came to pass also on another Sabbath that He entered into the synagog and taught; and there was a man whose right hand was withered.** V. 7. **And the scribes and Pharisees watched Him whether He would heal on the Sabbath-day, that they might find an accusation against Him.** V. 8. **But He knew their thoughts, and said to the man which had the withered hand, Rise up and stand forth in the midst. And he arose and stood forth.** V. 9. **Then said Jesus unto them, I will ask you one thing: Is it lawful on the Sabbath-days to do good, or to do evil? to save life, or to destroy it?** V. 10. **And looking round about upon them all, He said unto the man, Stretch forth thy hand. And he did so; and his hand was restored whole as the other.** V. 11. **And they were filled with madness, and communed one with another what they might do to Jesus.** V. 12. **And it came to pass in those days that He went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God.** On the other Sabbath, the one following that on which the Lord had given the Pharisees the first lesson concerning the real meaning of the Sabbath, Jesus was again in the synagog, teaching, as was His custom. He was preaching when the incident which is here related occurred. There was a man in the synagog, probably brought there purposely by the Pharisees, whose right hand was withered, as the result of disease or accident. Now the scribes and Pharisees kept watching in a sly, furtive manner what Jesus would do when the condition of this man would be brought to His attention. If the Lord would heal the man, they thought they would be able to make out a case against Him from their law. But Jesus knew the hypocritical reasoning of their hearts and took up their challenge. He had the sick man stand forth in the center of the room, in order that all those present might see him and the miracle which He proposed to do to him. Jesus now directed a question to His enemies, to show them that He read the thoughts of their hearts, for He was filled with the emotions of anger and pity. He asked them pointblank whether it was the right and proper thing, whether it should be considered an obligation resting upon all those present to do good or to do evil on the Sabbath, to save life or to destroy it. To leave any sick and crippled person in his misery for even one minute longer than is necessary is a transgression of the Fifth Commandment; this fact they should know. There was no answer forthcoming, however, the Pharisees being convinced in their hearts, but still too stubborn to bear witness to the truth. Jesus therefore once more looked around upon the circle of faces, hoping to find some indication of yielding; but there was none. And so He performed the miracle before their eyes. At His command the sick man stretched forth his hand, and it was restored to full health and strength at once. The Pharisees were again foiled, and this fact filled them with insane fury against the Lord. Their senseless anger was directed at Jesus, especially because the miracle would tend to make Him

popular with the people, since they had not been able to answer His question. From this time forth they were continually active in considering ways and means to remove Him. They frankly sought His life, Mark 3, 6. So far can hypocrisy bring a person that fights against the knowledge of truth that he will excuse the most conspicuous lack of love and mercy, and will conceive a deadly hatred against any one that suggests the proper observance of the summary of the Law. But Jesus gave them no opportunity at this time to carry out their murderous designs. It was in those days, as Luke remarks, that He again withdrew to a mountain. There, in the solitude and silence, He found the right conditions under which He could, without disturbance or distraction, pour out His heart in prayer to His heavenly Father. He spent the entire night in prayer, not a minute too much under the circumstances when He was preparing to extend His ministry. Note: Regular, intimate, importunate prayer to God is the best way of obtaining strength, above all before an important step in life.

The Twelve Apostles. Luke 6, 13—16.

V. 13. **And when it was day, He called unto Him His disciples; and of them He chose twelve, whom also He named apostles:** v. 14. **Simon (whom He also named Peter) and Andrew, his brother, James and John, Philip and Bartholomew,** v. 15. **Matthew and Thomas, James, the son of Alphaeus, and Simon, called Zelotes,** v. 16. **and Judas, the brother of James, and Judas Iscariot, which also was the traitor.** Having prepared Himself for this important step by an all-night vigil and prayer, Jesus now carried out His plan. He called all His disciples to Him, and from their total number He selected twelve, to whom He gave the honoring title apostles, those sent forth. Their principal work was to consist in going forth in His name and spreading the glorious Gospel of His redemption. A few notices concerning the work of these men, taken from Scripture and history, may prove of interest. Simon, who later became a true Peter or rock-man, was actively engaged in missionary work in the East and West. He is said to have suffered martyrdom in Rome under Nero, by being crucified. His brother Andrew did his principal work in Scythia, north of the Black Sea, where he also suffered death by crucifixion. James, the son of Zebedee, was the first martyr from the ranks of the apostles, dying by the sword of Herod, Acts 12, 2. His brother John was the beloved disciple of the Lord. He died at an advanced age in the midst of his congregation at Ephesus. Philip is said to have proclaimed the Gospel in Phrygia, where he suffered martyrdom by crucifixion. Bartholomew, or Nathanael, worked in India and suffered a like fate. Matthew Levi is said to have been the first apostle of the Ethiopians. He was put to death in a frightful manner by nails driven through his body. Thomas Didymus, the Doubter, brought the Gospel-message into the far East, into Media, Persia, and India, where he also died as a martyr. James, the son of Alphaeus, also known as the Younger, Mark 15, 40, is probably to be distinguished from James, the brother of the Lord, the author of the Epistle of James. Simon of Cana, called Zelotes, is said to have journeyed as far as the British Isles and there suffered martyrdom. Judas, the son of James, to be distinguished from the brother of James of the same name, was known also as Lebbaeus or Thaddaeus. His field of activity was Arabia. The last apostle, Judas of Kerioth, was the traitor.[42])

Miracles of Healing and Preaching.

Luke 6, 17—49.

Healings of various kinds: V. 17. **And He came down with them, and stood in the plain, and the company of His disciples, and a great multitude of people out of all Judea and Jerusalem, and from the sea-coast of Tyre and Sidon, which came to hear Him, and to be healed of their diseases;** v. 18. **and they that were vexed with unclean spirits; and they were healed.** V. 19. **And the whole multitude sought to touch Him; for there went virtue out of Him, and healed them all.** This passage shows how far the influence of Christ's ministry extended. As Jesus came down from the summit of the mountain and reached a plateau on the mountainside, He had before His eyes a great gathering of people. Not only was there a large number of His own disciples, but a large multitude of people from all Judea, from proud Jerusalem, from Tyre and Sidon, the cities by the Mediterranean Sea. They all had come to hear Jesus and to be healed of various diseases. But there were also many of such as were bothered or troubled with evil spirits: all of them gathered about the great Teacher and Healer. The popularity of Jesus had reached its greatest height. All these sick people sought to touch Him; and the pity and sympathy of His Savior's heart went out to them. Strength, the power of the almighty Physician, went out from His person, and they were all healed.

The beginning of the sermon: V. 20. **And He lifted up His eyes on His disciples and said, Blessed be ye poor; for yours is the kingdom of God.** V. 21. **Blessed are ye that hunger now; for ye shall be filled. Blessed are ye that weep now; for ye shall laugh.** V. 22. **Blessed are ye when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you from their company, and shall reproach you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of Man's sake.** V. 23. **Rejoice ye in that day, and leap for joy; for, behold,**

42) Besser, *Bibelstunden*, 1, 240—242.

your reward is great in heaven; for in the like manner did their fathers unto the prophets. This discourse is commonly considered as an extract of the Sermon on the Mount, but it is not essential to regard it as such. The Lord may well have spoken on the same subject and in much the same words upon different occasions. The words were addressed chiefly to His disciples, but the other people were also within reach of His voice and had an opportunity to take with them the golden truths which the Lord here uttered. Blessed the poor: Not so much those that are poor in the goods of this world, although the truly poor are usually found among these, but those that are poor in spirit, that in themselves and in the whole world neither have nor find what can truly delight their souls. This poverty has a glorious promise: For yours is the kingdom of God. They will receive the true riches of the grace of God in Christ Jesus. Blessed that now hunger: Not spoken of physical hunger, but of that greater desire for the food from on high, the hungering and thirsting after righteousness. They will be filled: The bounteous riches of the beauty of God's table are theirs. Blessed those that weep now: Such as feel deeply the distress of sins and their consequences and live in constant sorrow because of them. For they shall laugh: The joy of the Redeemer will be theirs, filling them with a happiness beyond all human comprehension. Blessed are ye if the people hate you; if they show this hatred by withdrawing from you, by ostracizing you as people afflicted with a malignant disease; if they vituperate you and cast your name out from them and their society on account of the Savior. Note: So thoroughly has the amalgamation of the world with the Church been done, so far has it progressed, that such isolation is rare in our days, more's the shame! People that call themselves Christians will rather confine their Christianity and its profession and practise to a few hours on Sunday than to bear the reproach of the Lord, for the sake of the Savior. The spirit of martyrdom seems to have left the Church entirely. Denials of Christ are practised daily, confessions for the sake of the Christian principle are rare. Rejoice in that day and leap: That is a reason for being happy, that the world refuses to recognize the Christians as belonging to them, that they accuse them of narrowness and bigotry, that it withdraws from them; that is an evidence of Christian profession. For, behold, your reward will be great in heaven. Just because it is a reward of mercy, it will be all the more acceptable. When Christians suffer such persecutions, they are but following in the footsteps of the early martyrs, those that preferred death to the denial of the Lord and the Christian doctrines and practises.

A threefold woe: V. 24. **But woe unto you that are rich! for ye have received your consolation.** V. 25. **Woe unto you that are full! for ye shall hunger. Woe unto you that laugh now! for ye shall mourn and weep.** V. 26. **Woe unto you when all men shall speak well of you! for so did their fathers to the false prophets.** Woe unto you rich people! for you have your solace in advance. This is spoken, as often in Scripture, Mark 10, 23; 1 Tim. 6, 9, of those that place their trust in their money. The Christian that is rich does not think of putting his faith in mammon. He knows that he is not in reality the owner of the goods entered under his name, but the steward of God, with the greater responsibilities, the greater the amount of riches which men call his. And he must give an account on the last day. Those people, therefore, that consider their wealth their own to do with as they please, and who use it with this idea in mind, to receive their good things in the present lifetime, Luke 16, 25, have the only solace that they will ever get, Job 31, 24. They may seem satisfied and try to persuade themselves and others that they are happy; but what about the world to come? Woe unto you that are filled up; for ye shall hunger. Those that seek the satisfaction of all their desires in this life and are rewarded in such a way that they get all that they have longed for, have their ambition realized. But they will have to suffer hunger throughout eternity. Woe unto you that laugh now; for ye shall mourn and weep. Those that have the motto: Let us eat, drink, and be merry, for to-morrow we shall be dead, and live in accordance with it, may assume a boisterous happiness in the enjoyment of the pleasures of this world. But the time is coming when they must render account of every moment foolishly spent in the lust of the flesh, in the lust of the eyes, in the pride of life. Then there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. The last woe is one directed especially to the apostles. If every one speaks well of them, praises them, the chances are that they have omitted some part of their duty, that pertaining to the fearless denunciation of sin. That has ever been a special feature of the false prophet's work that they preach to the itching ears of the people, 2 Tim. 4, 3; Ezek. 13, 18—20; Is. 56, 10. That is no recommendation, but the strongest censure that could be spoken upon a pastor's work, that he hurts no one, and that no one hurts him.

The law of love: V. 27. **But I say unto you which hear, Love your enemies, do good to them which hate you,** v. 28. **bless them that curse you, and pray for them which despitefully use you.** V. 29. **And unto him that smiteth thee on the one cheek offer also the other; and him that taketh away thy cloak forbid not to take thy coat also.** V. 30. **Give to every man that asketh of thee, and of him that taketh away thy goods ask them not again.** V. 31. **And as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise.** There is a double

contrast here: Jesus had uttered His woes against various classes of people, but that would not give others a right to act in an arbitrary way, according to their own interpretation of the saying; He had addressed His disciples mainly, but now He purposely includes all those that heard His discourse. All that were within reach of His voice at that time, and all that are in a position to hear His words to-day, should observe the law of love toward their enemies. The contrast throughout emphasizes the point which Jesus wishes to make: To love, not friends, for there no urging is needed, but enemies; to do good, not to those that show us every form of kindness, for there the act of reciprocating is self-evident, but to those that hate us; to bless, not those that wish us well, for there we return the greetings as a matter of course, but those that heap imprecations and curses upon us; to pray, not for those whose kind solicitude surrounds us every day, for there the remembrance is almost matter-of-fact, but those that spread calumnies about us. Needless to say, these ethical precepts of Christ must themselves in turn be explained in the spirit of Christ, for He is the highest and best example. Some practical examples to illustrate the scope of the precepts: To the smiter of one cheek the other should be turned; from him that forcibly takes the upper garment the lower should not be withheld; to him that asks we should give; what is taken by force we should cheerfully resign. To that extent will Christian meekness in individual cases go, and where no harm is done to others incidentally. For all of these rules must themselves be understood in the light of the Golden Rule: Just as ye wish that the people should act toward you, just so do ye act toward them. "The Savior gives a touchstone into the hands of His disciples, by which they might prove themselves as to whether their demeanor towards neighbors and enemies was in agreement with their duties. His utterance contains no principle, but the touchstone of morality, since it refers only to an outer form of action. Where it is so used, we shall discover in it a plain, simple, universally applicable precept of the practical wisdom of life, fully fitted for the purpose for which the Savior has given it." 43)

The application of the Golden Rule: V. 32. **For if ye love them which love you, what thank have ye? For sinners also love those that love them.** V. 33. **And if ye do good to them which do good to you, what thank have ye? For sinners also do even the same.** V. 34. **And if ye lend to them of whom ye hope to receive, what thank have ye? For sinners also lend to sinners, to receive as much again.** V. 35. **But love ye your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest; for He is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil.** There is no special favor or reward of mercy from God to be expected if we love only those that love us; in that case there is a condition of give and take which rewards the people involved. And such evidence of love is nothing extraordinary, for even the sinners, the outcasts, that profess no Christian morality do as much among themselves. The same holds true of doing good when others have done good to us. There is not even the feeling of exhilaration and joy over a good deed that animates us in such a case. And as for helping out some one that is in trouble, the mere lending of money may be a species of selfishness, for it will be for the purpose not only of having the capital returned, but of gaining the interest besides. The law of love requires in such a case rather that we help freely, without expecting anything in return. If the brother gets on his feet again, he will return the money received or pass the kindness on. Where the specific Christian character of works is concerned, the kindness must be that of pure altruism. It is for that reason that love of enemies is urged, and the doing of good where no returns are to be expected. For then the reward of mercy from the Lord will be correspondingly large, and we shall come nearer to the mind which is in our good and gracious Father in heaven. We, as children of the Highest, should exhibit the traits and characteristics of the good God. For He also, in His providence, is good and kind, even to the ungrateful and evil. And our Father will extend His favors to us in full measure, here in time and hereafter in eternity.

The measure of mercifulness: V. 36. **Be ye therefore merciful as your Father also is merciful.** V. 37. **Judge not, and ye shall not be judged; condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned; forgive, and ye shall be forgiven;** v. 38. **give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again.** Not only kindness and goodness is enjoined upon the Christians, but also mercy or mercifulness, something of that divine quality which had compassion upon us in Christ, our Savior. This will include refraining from officious judging and condemning of our neighbor, of his person and manner of life. Some forms of judging are enjoined by Scripture, as that of the erring brother, Matt. 18, 15, that of people in public office under a democratic form of government, and others. But so far as the personal life and transgressions of our neighbor are concerned, we must practise forgiveness if we wish to receive forgiveness. We must give if we hope to receive; the measure of God's gracious

43) Schaff, *Commentary, Luke*, 104.

kindness being filled in proportion to our sympathetic compassion: a good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and flowing over the top will be our portion if we practise the kindness whose example we have received so richly in our own lives. The generousness of our own nature and the graciousness of God's spirit are placed side by side, for our emulation, since the thought of His plenteous redemption should be a spur for us, Ps. 130, 7. "Where this mercy is not found, there is no faith. For if thy heart is full of faith that thou knowest that thy God has shown Himself thus to thee, with such mercy and goodness, without thy merit and altogether for nothing, while thou wert still His enemy and a child of eternal curse: if thou believest this, thou canst not refrain from showing thyself to thy neighbor in the same manner, and all that for love of God and for the benefit of thy neighbor. See to it, then, that thou make no difference between friend and enemy, worthy and unworthy; for thou seest that all those mentioned here have earned the opposite of our love and goodness." 44) "Therefore, if thy brother be a sinner, cover his sins and pray for him. If thou reveal his sin, thou art truly not a child of the merciful Father, for else thou wouldst be merciful like Him. That surely is true, that we cannot show such mercy to our neighbor as God has shown to us, but that is our great wickedness, that we act contrary to mercy; and that is a sure sign that we have no mercy." 45)

Parabolic sayings: V. 39. **And He spake a parable unto them, Can the blind lead the blind? Shall they not both fall into the ditch?** V. 40. **The disciple is not above his master; but every one that is perfect shall be as his master.** V. 41. **And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but perceivest not the beam that is in thine own eye?** V. 42. **Either, how canst thou say to thy brother, Brother, let me pull out the mote that is in thine eye, when thou thyself beholdest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite, cast out first the beam out of thine own eye, and then shalt thou see clearly to pull out the mote that is in thy brother's eye.** The proverbial saying concerning the blind people that attempt to lead others that are afflicted in the same way is here applied to such as have neither the proper understanding of mercy and goodness nor of their application in their relation toward their neighbor. Whosoever wants to show another person the way and teach him how to walk properly must first have the proper knowledge himself. He that wants to correct the sins and weaknesses of others must have gained the right knowledge concerning his own sinful condition. For the disciple is not above his teacher; he cannot learn more than his master knows and practises. He that presumes to teach others should not demand more of them than he himself is able to perform. The master is the pupil's pattern; if the latter has attained to that perfection, he is satisfied. Therefore guard against uncharitable judging and condemning. He that is always ready with blame, censure, and condemnation is as one that readily sees the mote, the tiny speck of dust, in his brother's eye, and feels the greatest concern for his brother and his brother's welfare until he has removed the insignificant dust, while he himself, during the whole process, has a beam in his own eye, which actually prevents his seeing clearly. A hypocrite, an actor of the worst kind, the Lord calls such a person, since his own infirmity and condition makes him unfit to be a fair judge. The proverbs in use to-day: Let each one sweep his own stoop first; and, They that live in glass houses must not cast stones, fitly give the sense of the Lord's injunction. Cp. Matt. 7, 3. "Therefore a Christian should train himself differently. When he sees the mote in his neighbor's eye, he should first, before he judges, step to the mirror and examine himself closely. There he will find such great beams that one could make pig-troughs out of them, so that he would be obliged to say: What shall this be? My neighbor grieves me once in a quarter, a half, a whole year; and I have grown so old and have never kept my God's commandments, yea, I transgress them every hour and moment: how can I be such a desperate scoundrel? My sins are all immense oak-trees, and that poor splinter, the dust in my brother's eye, I suffer to excite me more than my great beam? But it must not be; I must first see how I may become rid of my sin; there I shall have so much to do that I may well forget the tiny splinter. For I am disobedient to God, to my government, to my father and mother, to my master, and I continue herein and do not stop sinning; and yet I want to be unmerciful against my neighbor and not overlook a single word? O no: Christians must not act thus." 46)

A further application: V. 43. **For a good tree bringeth not forth corrupt fruit; neither doth a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit.** V. 44. **For every tree is known by his own fruit. For of thorns men do not gather figs, nor of a bramble-bush gather they grapes.** V. 45. **A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is evil; for of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh.** The heart of a man is like a tree, whose fruits are the works of the man. It is the nature of a good tree to bring forth good fruit; it is the nature of a rotten, evil tree to bring forth bad fruit. By its fruit a tree is

44) Luther, 11, 1275; 13, 378.
45) Luther, 11, 1281.
46) Luther, 13, 750.

judged. To attempt to gather figs from thorns is just as foolish as to look for grapes on bramble-bushes. Even so a man whose heart has been renewed by faith, and thus has been changed to a truly good heart, will produce out of this truly good heart good works that will stand the test of God's scrutiny. On the other hand, a person whose heart has not been changed by faith and is thus evil before God, will bring forth only such works as must be condemned in His sight. As is the heart, so is the utterance. Cp. Ps. 36, 1.

A warning in conclusion: V. 46. **And why call ye Me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?** V. 47. **Whosoever cometh to Me, and heareth My sayings, and doeth them, I will show you to whom he is like:** v. 48. **he is like a man which built an house, and digged deep, and laid the foundation on a rock; and when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently upon that house, and could not shake it; for it was founded upon a rock.** V. 49. **But he that heareth, and doeth not, is like a man that without a foundation built an house upon the earth; against which the stream did beat vehemently, and immediately it fell; and the ruin of that house was great.** A word of searching earnestness to such as make Christianity a mere confession, but not a profession, which they practise, that make great protestations of loyalty to Christ, but do not back up their words with concrete proofs. To contradict with every act in life what one vehemently asserts to be his conviction is the most miserable form of contradiction. And in the end, the mere confessor will find his house of cards and hypocrisy toppling about his ears. To impress this fact upon His hearers, Christ places two men before them in a parable. The first one wanted to build a house; so he dug and kept on deepening his trenches until he was sure that he had struck bed-rock. There he laid a solid foundation, upon which he proceeded to build his house. Then came the test. A flood came rushing in like the billows of the sea, and the angry waters tugged at the foundation of that house, but could not budge it: it was built well, with firm solidity. That is the faith of a man that trusts in Jesus with all his heart as his Savior. The second man also wanted to build a house. But he set the rafters and joists on the ground without any foundation; he built at haphazard on the surface. When the rushing stream of the flood struck this edifice to tug at its walls, it toppled over and sank down quickly, and the fall of that house was great. That is the faith and the fate of a man that confesses Christ merely with his lips and draws nigh to Him only with his mouth. In times of stress and danger, when the storms of life beat against the weak heart, there is only one rock that will weather every gale, that is Jesus the Christ, the one and only Savior of mankind. To learn to put his trust in the Redeemer and the glorious Gospel of the redemption through His blood must be the constant effort of every Christian. And the true believer will not be satisfied with a mere beginning, but will dig and keep deepening his knowledge of God's Word and will, in order that he may be prepared for the evil days, and for the hours of the valley of the shadow of death.

Summary. *Jesus has two disputes with scribes and Pharisees concerning the observance of Sabbath and the works permitted thereon, selects His twelve apostles, performs many miracles, and teaches the apostles and a great many people on the mountainside.*

CHAPTER 7.

The Centurion of Capernaum. Luke 7, 1—10.

The prayer of the centurion: V. 1. **Now when He had ended all His sayings in the audience of the people, He entered into Capernaum.** V. 2. **And a certain centurion's servant, who was dear unto him, was sick, and ready to die.** V. 3. **And when he heard of Jesus, he sent unto Him the elders of the Jews, beseeching Him that He would come and heal his servant.** V. 4. **And when they came to Jesus, they besought Him instantly, saying, That he was worthy for whom He should do this;** v. 5. **for he loveth our nation, and he hath built us a synagog.** Jesus brought His long discourse to a close. It was addressed to the hearing of the people; they were not merely to listen inattentively and forget all the precepts within a few minutes, but their hearing, their understanding, was to take hold of the great truths, in order that they might become the property of the mind, and be received into the heart. Some time afterward, Jesus entered into Capernaum. In this city there lived a certain centurion, officer of a Roman garrison stationed there, probably on account of the great highway that led through here from Damascus to the Mediterranean Sea. This Roman officer had become acquainted with books of the Jews and with the hopes of the Messiah, of whom they were always speaking. He had also come to the conclusion that Jesus, by whose hand such great miracles were being performed throughout Galilee, must be the promised Messiah. This centurion had a servant who, though a slave, was very dear to him, for he was a humane master. This servant had been taken ill and was at the point of death. Since the reports concerning Christ's activity, which reached the officer from time to time, had given him the convic-

tion that here was the great promised prophet of the Jews, he sent a delegation to Jesus at this time. The men whom he sent were carrying out his embassy, speaking in his name; he spoke through them, Matt. 8, 5. They were elders of the people, probably officers of the synagog, for not all Jewish leaders joined in the campaign of hate against Jesus. These men carried out the centurion's wishes in a very able manner. They not only stated the earnest prayer that the Lord would come and restore to full health the servant, but they also added some reasons why Jesus ought to grant the request. They declared the centurion to be worthy of help, since he was not one of the proud Romans that vexed and oppressed the Jews upon every occasion, but rather loved the nation. He had lived among them for so long that he had conceived a genuine liking for their doctrine and for their religious institutions. This affection had taken the form of building a synagog for the Jews as a token of regard. "The Deutsche Orientgesellschaft, which was carrying on excavations in Egypt, Babylonia, and Assyria, undertook the investigation of the remains of ancient synagogs in Galilee and the Jaulan. Among these they excavated the ruins of the synagog at Tell Hum on the Sea of Galilee, the probable site of Capernaum. Here they found the remains of a once beautiful synagog which was probably built in the fourth century A. D. Beneath this is the floor of a still older building. The last is probably the synagog in which so many of the incidents of the ministry of Christ in Capernaum took place, the one built by a Roman centurion." 47)

The faith of the centurion: V. 6. **Then Jesus went with them. And when He was now not far from the house, the centurion sent friends to Him, saying unto Him, Lord, trouble not Thyself; for I am not worthy that Thou shouldest enter under my roof;** v. 7. **wherefore neither thought I myself worthy to come unto Thee; but say in a word, and my servant shall be healed.** V. 8. **For I also am a man set under authority, having under me soldiers, and I say unto one, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it.** V. 9. **When Jesus heard these things, He marveled at him, and turned Him about, and said unto the people that followed Him, I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel.** V. 10. **And they that were sent, returning to the house, found the servant whole that had been sick.** Strange disagreement! The Jewish elders declare that he is worthy, the centurion says that he is not worthy. They had intimated in their petition that it would be best for Jesus to come, and He, accordingly, went with them. The officer maintains that so much bother and inconvenience on the part of Christ was too much honor for him. When the centurion received the news that Jesus was coming in person, a possibility with which he had not reckoned, the fear of his unworthiness took hold of him. Jesus was even now quite near. Therefore the Roman quickly dispatches other friends to intercept Him, saying that Christ should not bother, should not put Himself out by coming in person. He as the host, and his house as reception-hall for the Most High: that seemed altogether too incongruous to him. For that reason also he had not come in person, but had sent a delegation to plead with the Lord. Note: The argument of the centurion is a model of humility, especially since he does not draw the conclusion, but makes his object so obvious that the effect is all the more overwhelming. He himself was a mere man; Christ was the Lord from heaven. He was a man under authority, in a constant state of subordination; Christ was the King of kings, the Lord of lords. Yet the centurion could give commands which his soldiers and his slave must carry out at once at his bidding, so great was the authority of a mere man. Surely here was a clear case: Speak only in a word, by means of a single word, and the sickness must obey Thy almighty will. He that has the true, living faith in his heart realizes his own unworthiness and weakness before the Lord, and yet he does not doubt, but firmly believes, that the Lord of heaven loves him and will gladly help him. The believer understands what mercy is, and that the mercy of God is intended for those that are without worthiness and merit.

This argument of faith conquered Jesus. He was filled with astonishment; He turned to the multitude that was following Him and said: I tell you, not even in Israel have I found such faith. In the midst of the chosen people, to whom were entrusted the words of the revelation of God, the majority, if not all, should have felt as this Roman officer did, but they were here put to shame by an outsider. And in His joy over this rare find Jesus spoke the word for which the centurion had pleaded. When those that had been sent returned to the centurion's house, they found the sick servant restored to perfect health. Thus was the faith of this heathen rewarded. Faith at all times takes hold of Christ, the almighty, kind Helper and Savior, and thus it accepts from Christ help, comfort, grace, and every good thing. Faith depends entirely upon the Word, and therefore takes and puts into its own possession all that the Word promises.

Raising of the Widow's Son.

Luke 7, 11—17.

The miracle: V. 11. **And it came to pass the day after that He went into a city called Nain; and many of His disciples went with Him and much people.** V. 12. **Now, when He came nigh to the gate of**

47) Barton, *Archeology and the Bible*, 98.

the city, behold, there was a dead man carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow; and much people of the city was with her. V. 13. And when the Lord saw her, He had compassion on her, and said unto her, Weep not. V. 14. And He came and touched the bier; and they that bare him stood still. And He said, Young man, I say unto thee, Arise. V. 15. And he that was dead sat up, and began to speak. And He delivered him to his mother. Jesus did not remain in Capernaum after he had healed the centurion's servant, for the very next day we find Him approaching the little town of Nain, which was located at about an equal distance from Nazareth and Mount Tabor, to the south. Its name, Vale of Beauty, gives some idea of the surroundings, as they were also described by the early church historians. Jesus was accompanied, not only by a large number of His disciples, but also by a great multitude of people. As they came near to the gate of the city, a sad sight met their eyes, a funeral train just leaving the town for the burial-ground outside the gates. This was an exceptionally sad funeral, since the dead man was an only son, and his mother was a widow. Both husband and son taken away by death: her position merited sympathy such as was given her by her fellow-citizens, a great multitude of whom went with her to the grave. "This woman had two misfortunes on her back. First, she is a widow; that is a misfortune enough for a woman that she is desolate and alone, has no one from whom she may expect comfort. And for that reason God is often called in Scriptures a Father of the widows and orphans, as Ps. 68, 6, and Ps. 146, 9: The Lord preserveth the strangers; He relieveth the fatherless and widow. Secondly, she had only one single son, and he dies before her, though he might have been her comfort. Thus God acts here, takes the husband and the son away; she would much more gladly have lost house and home, yea, her own body than this son and her husband." "But this is pictured before us that we should learn that before God nothing is impossible, whether it be called damage, adversity, wrath, as severe as it may be, and remember that God sometimes suffers the punishment to go both over the good and the evil, yea, that He even permits the evil people to sit in the garden of roses and lets them suffer no want, but toward the pious He acts as though He is angry with them and cares nothing for them." 48) Note: There is a great contrast between the procession which is leaving the city, with sad and mournful steps, and that which is about to enter the city, happy because of the Savior in their midst. As Luther says, the Lord here boldly steps in the way of death, as the Mighty One, who has authority and might over him. Also: In Capernaum it is the daughter of Jairus, a mere child, that has barely closed her eyes in death; at Nain it is a young man, in the strength of incipient manhood, whose body is on the way to the place of burial; at Bethany it is a man in his best years that has rested in the grave for four days; surely enough diversity in these miracles of raising the dead.

When Jesus saw the funeral procession and noticed the peculiar sadness of the burial, His heart was moved with the deepest sympathy for the bereaved mother. He had all the feelings of a true man, and those feelings, which are brought out in our case but imperfectly and unwillingly, He showed without reserve, Heb. 4, 15. His word to the widow was: "Weep not!" With what an expression of heartfelt compassion Jesus must have spoken the word, and how fully the poor woman realized the cordiality of the greeting and its power, to which she clung! So the Lord often reminds also us, when we are in great sorrow and trouble, of some of the verses and Scripture-passages which we learned in our youth or read at some time, as a form of introduction to the help which He graciously grants us. Jesus then stepped to the frame upon which the dead man lay, He touched the coffin: the hand of Life rapped at the chamber of death. Those who carried the coffin stood at the touch of the Lord's hand. Then Jesus, as the Lord of life and death, gave a peremptory command: Young man, to thee I say, arise! He speaks to the dead as though he were merely sleeping. At His word the soul is reunited with the body, and death must yield up his prey. And the dead man, who was all ready to be buried, suddenly sat up and began to speak. He was restored to life. And Jesus gave him back to his mother, restored to the widow the one treasure which remained for her in life. She had been "surrounded with great pains and terror that she must have thought that God, heaven, earth, and everything were against her; and because she looks at things according to her flesh, she must conclude that it is impossible for her to be relieved of this fear. But when her son was awakened from death, then no other feeling took hold of her than as though heaven and earth, wood and stones, and everything was happy with her; then she forgot all pain and sorrow; all that went away; just as when a spark of fire is extinguished when it falls in the midst of the sea." 49) On the last day, when the Lord will return for judgment, He will halt the great funeral procession which is moving forward all over the world, He will bring the dead back to life, He will heal all wounds which death has made, He will reunite all those whom death has separated. Then there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain, Rev. 21, 4. That is the hope of the believers. While they are in this vale of

48) Luther, 11, 1649. 1660.

49) Luther, 11, 1653.

tears, they cling to the hope of the Gospel. And this hope will then be realized and revealed in them.

The effect of the miracle: V. 16. **And there came a fear on all; and they glorified God, saying, That a great prophet is risen up among us; and, That God hath visited His people.** V. 17. **And this rumor of Him went forth throughout all Judea and throughout all the region round about.** At this manifestation of almighty power which they had seen with their eyes, a fear and dread of the supernatural fell upon, took hold of, all the people. They felt the presence of God in this Man of Nazareth. But they did not acknowledge Him as the Messiah in spite of the greatness of the miracle. Merely as a great prophet they heralded Him; only as a visitation of God's grace did they look upon His coming. Their faith and understanding fell far short of that of the centurion of Capernaum. A mere recognition and acceptance of Jesus as a great prophet and social reformer is not sufficient at any time. All men must know Him to be the one and only Savior of the world. Only this knowledge and trust will bring salvation.

The Embassy of John the Baptist.

Luke 7, 18—35.

The question of the Baptist: V. 18. **And the disciples of John showed him all these things.** V. 19. **And John, calling unto him two of his disciples, sent them to Jesus, saying, Art Thou He that should come, or look we for another?** V. 20. **When the men were come unto Him, they said, John Baptist hath sent us unto Thee, saying, Art Thou He that should come, or look we for another?** After John the Baptist had been sure of the identity of Christ, John 1, 29—34, he had made an earnest effort to get his disciples to follow Jesus. A few left and joined the ranks of the disciples of the Lord. But some refused to give up their allegiance to John. They could not distinguish between essentials and non-essentials; they felt that the austere life of John the Baptist belonged to the substance of a moral life. But many of them hovered about Christ and reported to John what they thought worth while. The great miracle of the raising of the young man at Nain made a deep impression upon some of them, and they hastened to the prison of John and gave him a report concerning this last miraculous deed. John now thought the time ripe for a last effort to lead his disciples to Jesus. For that reason he delegated two of them to go to Jesus with the question: Art Thou He that is coming, that should come, the promised Messiah, or must we expect, and prepare for, another? The disciples of John carried out his order very faithfully, repeating the very words of their master.

Christ's reference to the prophecy: V. 21. **And in that same hour He cured many of their infirmities and plagues and of evil spirits, and unto many that were blind He gave sight.** V. 22. **Then Jesus, answering, said unto them, Go your way, and tell John what things ye have seen and heard; how that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, to the poor the Gospel is preached.** V. 23. **And blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in Me.** The time of their coming to Jesus could not have been arranged more auspiciously. For just then Jesus was busily engaged with performing miracles of all kinds: He cured many of sicknesses, of plagues which were scourges upon their backs; He healed some of evil spirits; to many that were blind He granted the priceless favor or boon of sight. With reference to these and other miracles Jesus reminded the messengers of the Baptist of a prophecy which had been spoken concerning the Messiah, Is. 35, 5. 6; 61, 1. 2. There miracles of all kinds, also in the field of physical healing, had been foretold as taking place through the power of the Messiah. Cp. Matt. 11, 4—6. Any one that pays the slightest attention to the Old Testament prophecy, and compares it with the present visible fulfilment, cannot doubt that Jesus is the Christ. And Jesus adds a word of warning for the special benefit of the two disciples: Blessed is he that shall not be offended in Me. That was the danger for all those disciples of John that were not satisfied with the manner in which the disciples of Jesus were conducting themselves, without regard to the rules of the elders about fasting and washing of hands, etc., chapter 5, 30. If a person is so carried away with a false asceticism that he wants to curtail the liberty of the New Testament, and for that reason is offended at Jesus the Christ, he has only himself to blame for the evil consequences.

Christ's testimony concerning John: V. 24. **And when the messengers of John were departed, He began to speak unto the people concerning John, What went ye out into the wilderness for to see? A reed shaken with the wind?** V. 25. **But what went ye out for to see? A man clothed in soft raiment? Behold, they which are gorgeously appareled, and live delicately, are in kings' courts.** V. 26. **But what went ye out for to see? A prophet? Yea, I say unto you, and much more than a prophet.** V. 27. **This is he of whom it is written, Behold, I send My messenger before Thy face which shall prepare Thy way before Thee.** Cp. Matt. 11, 7—15. The Lord took this opportunity to bear witness to John and his ministry. The happenings of that time were so recent that they were still fresh in the memory. He put the question to the whole multitude, since many of them, undoubtedly, had been among those that were drawn by the reputation and by the powerful

sermons of John. Had they gone out into the wilderness to see a reed agitated and swayed by the wind? John had not been a weathervane in his preaching, 2 Tim. 4, 2—5. He had spoken the truth in a most uncompromising way, regardless of the fact that the great ones of the earth may have felt offended. Had they gone out into the wilderness to find a man clothed in soft garments? There is a place for such people; they may be found among those that live in the houses of kings. There those living in luxury and clothed with splendid apparel properly belonged. But John was a poor preacher of repentance. The luxuries of life had no appeal for him; he spurned the delicate side of wealth. Note: There is a fine hint in both references of the Lord for him that will read aright. But now came the main question: Had they gone out to see a prophet? Then indeed they had not been disappointed. For John was a prophet, and greater than the prophets of old. Of him it had been prophesied that he should be a messenger before the face of the Messiah, to prepare the way before Him, Mal. 3, 1.

Further praise of John: V. 28. **For I say unto you, Among those that are born of women there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist; but he that is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he.** V. 29. **And all the people that heard him, and the publicans, justified God, being baptized with the baptism of John.** V. 30. **But the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the counsel of God against themselves, being not baptized of him.** High praise indeed: All the prophets of old merely prophesied of the Messiah as one coming in the future, John pointed to the present Christ, testified of Him directly. And yet, by a strange paradox, he that is smaller than all in the kingdom of God is greater than John. Though John bore witness of Jesus as having come into the midst of His people, he yet saw but the dawn, and not the full break of day. His work was finished, his course was run before Christ entered into His glory. And so the children of the New Testament that have the complete fulfilment of the prophecy before their eyes, that know Christ crucified and resurrected, that possess the complete account of salvation in the writings of the evangelists and apostles, these have a greater revelation and a brighter light than even John the Baptist. But in spite of John's greatness, his ministry did not receive the recognition everywhere that it should have had. The popular judgment, indeed, had agreed with the estimate which Jesus had just given. The whole people, even the publicans, had, by submitting to the baptism of John, acknowledged the power of God in him, had endorsed him as a prophet. But the Pharisees and scribes had been found a sad exception. The counsel of God with regard to the salvation of all men concerned also them, they were invited as well as the others. But they deliberately rejected and spurned this counsel of love; they refused to be baptized by John; they preferred the damnation brought upon them by their hardheartedness. This has always been the fate of the Gospel-message with regard to the majority of people. God calls out to the whole world, He invites all men without exception to become partakers of His grace and mercy in Jesus Christ the Savior. But they refuse to accept His love and the proffered hand of help; they prefer to continue in their life of sin and thus are condemned by their own fault.

Parable of the children in the market-place: V. 31. **And the Lord said, Whereunto, then, shall I liken the men of this generation? and to what are they like?** V. 32 **They are like unto children sitting in the market-place, and calling one to another, and saying, We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced; we have mourned to you, and ye have not wept.** V. 33. **For John the Baptist came, neither eating bread nor drinking wine; and ye say, He hath a devil.** V. 34. **The Son of Man is come eating and drinking; and ye say, Behold a gluttonous man, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners!** V. 35. **But wisdom is justified of all her children.** The Lord here scores the inconsistency of the Jewish people as a whole, and especially of their leaders, by comparing their actions to those of capricious, peevish children, whom no game will suit that their playmates propose. If these play on the flute, they refuse to dance to the tune; if they sing a mournful song to them, they refuse to simulate sorrow. In the language which Jesus spoke, there is a fine play on words in this passage, which brings out the emphasis of His thought very beautifully. Just as in the case of these children, no one can please the Jews, neither John nor Christ. John preached the baptism unto repentance and led a strict and austere life, and their verdict was: He is possessed of a demon; he is not in his right mind; why listen to him? When Jesus came, He introduced no such peculiarities, but lived and acted like other people, only with a kindly sympathy for all men. And this behavior they distorted into a frightful caricature; calling Him a glutton, a drunkard, a companion of publicans and sinners. Thus the Jews contradicted themselves to their own condemnation. But Jesus reminds them of a proverbial saying: Wisdom is justified of all her own children. There is no disagreement between this passage and that Matt. 11, 19. By a slight change in vocalization the Aramaic word used by Jesus may mean either "works" or "children." Both renderings are inspired and accepted by God. The personal, divine Wisdom, Christ, Prov. 8, was obliged to justify Himself against the judicial verdict of those who should have been His children by faith, but who refused to accept Him. His work stood the test of God's judgment in spite of their unbelief.

The First Anointing of Jesus.

Luke 7, 36—50.

The anointing: V. 36. **And one of the Pharisees desired Him that He would eat with him. And He went into the Pharisee's house, and sat down to meat.** V. 37. **And, behold, a woman in the city which was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at meat in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster box of ointment,** v. 38. **and stood at His feet behind Him weeping, and began to wash His feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed His feet, and anointed them with the ointment.** Jesus was the friend of publicans and sinners, but not in the derogatory sense in which His enemies used the word. The true nature of His relations to the classes of people that were held in such contempt by the self-righteous Pharisees is shown in this story. One of the Pharisees invited Jesus to take dinner with him, and Jesus accepted, going into the house and reclining at the table. There is no mention of the preliminary usages and customs by which a host among the Jews honored his guest. Then a strange incident took place. A woman of the city, a notorious character, heard of Christ's presence in the house of the Pharisee. She had been deceived by the apparent pleasures of sin, she had received gall and wormwood instead of the expected honey, and now she was, in desperation, looking down into the abyss of a life of shame. But the news of Jesus, the Savior of sinners, whose kindness to the lowly and outcast was heralded far and wide, had brought her to the realization of her position; she now felt the full weight of her corruption and misery. So she bought an alabaster vase of costly ointment and, coming into the house, she stood at the feet of Jesus, weeping so bitterly in the full consciousness of her sinfulness that her tears washed the feet of Jesus, and she could try them off with her hair. And she kissed His feet again and again and anointed them with her precious salve. It was an exhibition of overwhelming sorrow, combined with an almost pitiful clinging to the Lord as the only one in whom she could put her trust. And the tears of her sorrow, as one commentator has it, became tears of ineffable joy that Jesus did not spurn her, that she had a Savior with a heart full of loving sympathy and boundless grace for even the worst of sinners.

The Pharisee's condemnation: V. 39. **Now when the Pharisee which had bidden Him saw it, he spake within himself, saying, This Man, if He were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth Him; for she is a sinner.** V. 40. **And Jesus, answering, said unto him, Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee. And he saith, Master, say on.** The host had watched the entire proceeding with ill-concealed disgust. The very thought of Jesus' being touched by such a notorious character made him shudder. And therefore he passed the verdict in his heart that Jesus could not be a prophet. The tears of the woman were disagreeable to him, and the smell of the ointment filled him with loathing. Note: The same spirit of self-righteous repulsiveness is found in the modern Pharisees. They draw aside their silken skirts or their fur-lined overcoats, even when they are given the assurance that a former sinner has left the path of transgression, not knowing that their hearts are filled with a far worse, a much more dangerous disease, that of pride and conceit. But Jesus knew the thoughts of the Pharisee, and He soon gave him evidence that He was a prophet who knew the hearts of men. He determined to give this haughty Pharisee a much-needed lesson, but in a kind and gentle way, with the object of convincing and gaining him. The host politely acquiesced when the Lord asked him whether He might tell him a certain matter, lay a certain case before him.

The parable and its application: V. 41. **There was a certain creditor which had two debtors; the one owed five hundred pence and the other fifty.** V. 42. **And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell Me therefore, which of them will love him most?** V. 43. **Simon answered and said, I suppose that he to whom he forgave most. And He said unto him, Thou hast rightly judged.** V. 44. **And He turned to the woman and said unto Simon, Seest thou this woman? I entered into thine house; thou gavest Me no water for My feet, but she hath washed My feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head.** V. 45. **Thou gavest Me no kiss; but this woman, since the time I came in, hath not ceased to kiss My feet.** V. 46. **My head with oil thou didst not anoint; but this woman hath anointed My feet with ointment.** Two debtors were to one creditor; a fine bit of emphasis for the sake of the application of the parable: Simon and the woman, both debtors to the Lord. In the one case the debt was very large, five hundred denarii, almost eighty-five dollars; in the other very small, only one-tenth of that sum. Both were unable to pay, both were excused from paying the debt. Now the question was: Which of the two debtors was under the greater obligation to the Lord, and whose love would therefore be the greater? The answer was obvious, although the Pharisee answered somewhat cautiously that such was his opinion. Jesus accepted the answer gravely. But now came the application. For the first time Jesus turned to the woman directly and also asks Simon to look at her whom he had despised so absolutely. For the proud Pharisee could learn a lesson from the outcast of society. Jesus draws a parallel between the behavior of Simon

and of this woman. Note the sharp contrast throughout the description: water — tears; kiss of welcome — repeated kisses; common oil — precious ointment. Simon had not even observed the common courtesies invariably extended to a visitor or guest. When a guest came to the house of a Jew, he was greeted with a salutation and with a kiss, out under the entrance portico. Then the servants brought the water for rinsing off the feet, since people wore only sandals, and their feet became very dusty. And then followed the anointing with oil, of which a few drops were poured on the head of the guest.[50] The words of Christ were a fine, effective reproof. "That, then, is the office of Christ the Lord which He carries on in the world, namely, that He rebukes sin and forgives sin. He rebukes the sin of those that do not acknowledge their sin, and especially of those that do not want to be sinners and consider themselves holy, as this Pharisee did. He forgives sin to those that feel it and desire forgiveness; as this woman was a sinner. With His rebuke He earns little thanks; with the forgiveness of sins He succeeds in having His doctrine branded as heresy and blasphemy.... But neither should be omitted. The preaching unto repentance and the rebuking we must have, in order that people come to the knowledge of their sins and become meek. The preaching of grace and of forgiveness of sins we must have, in order that the people do not fall into despair. Therefore the preacher's office should preserve the mean between presumption and despair, that preaching is done thus that people neither become presumptuous nor despair." [51]

The lesson: V. 47. **Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much; but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little.** V. 48. **And He said unto her, Thy sins are forgiven.** V. 49. **And they that sat at meat with Him began to say within themselves, Who is this that forgiveth sins also?** V. 50. **And He said to the woman, Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace.** On the basis of the parable and the facts as stated by Christ, He tells Simon: Forgiven are her many sins, for she loved much. The fact that her many grievous trespasses had found forgiveness in the sight of Christ and God filled her heart with joyful love, which she was constrained to show by her outward behavior. The forgiveness was not the result of the love, but the love followed and flowed out of the forgiveness, just as the sun does not shine because it is light outside, but it is light because the sun shines. "The papists adduce this verse against our doctrine of faith and say, Since Christ says: Her many sins are forgiven because she loved much, therefore forgiveness of sins is not obtained by faith, but by love. But that this cannot be the meaning the parable proves, which shows clearly that love follows out of faith. Therefore, when one has forgiveness of sins and believes, there faith follows. Where one does not have forgiveness, there is no love." [52] On the other hand, there is no partial forgiveness. A sinner to whom certain grievous sins are forgiven has forgiveness of them all. Simon's lack of love proved that he had no forgiveness, in fact, cared nothing about forgiveness in his proud Pharisaic mind. But to the woman Jesus now said: Forgiven are thy sins. This word out of the Savior's mouth was the seal and surety of her forgiveness. It was the word which inflamed the glow of her faith into a rich fire. Though the other guests took offense at the words of Jesus, He continued in His kind assurance to the poor woman. Her faith, which she had proved by her love, had saved her. Through her faith she had accepted the redemption of Jesus, she was a blessed child of salvation.

Summary. *Jesus heals the servant of the centurion of Capernaum, raises the widow's son of Nain, receives an embassy of John the Baptist, and is anointed in the house of a Pharisee, teaching a lesson in faith and forgiveness.*

50) Goodwin, *Moses et Aaron*, 476—486.
51) Luther, 13b, 2762. 2764.
52) Cp. Luther, 7, 1456.

CHAPTER 8.

Teaching in Parables. Luke 8, 1—21.

Women minister unto Christ: V. 1. **And it came to pass afterward that He went throughout every city and village, preaching and showing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God; and the Twelve were with Him,** v. 2. **and certain women, which had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities: Mary, called Magdalene, out of whom went seven devils,** v. 3. **and Joanna, the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward, and Susanna, and many others, which ministered unto Him of their substance.** As usual, Luke is not concerned about the exact sequence of events that happened at about the same time, in this case during the ministry of Jesus in Galilee. Some time afterward, while the Lord was still in Galilee, He passed along through, He made a tour of the cities and towns of, that part of Palestine. His chief work is again brought into the foreground, proclaiming and gospeling the kingdom of God, preaching the good news of the salvation of mankind. This fact cannot be emphasized often enough, especially in these days of the perversion of the doctrine of redemption. The twelve apostles

were with the Lord on this tour; they were the theological students, receiving both theoretical and practical training in the school of Jesus. But there were also others with Him, certain women whom Luke mentions by name, a feature of his gospel. Mary, who was called Magdalene, had been healed by Jesus when He drove seven demons out of her. Johanna, or Joanna, the wife of Chuza, the administrator, or steward, of Herod, and Susanna, and many others, Matt. 27, 55, had also received special favors at the hand of Jesus, as being healed of evil spirits and sicknesses. These were bound to Jesus by the bonds of gratitude, and they were glad and proud to be of service to Him with their goods, for some of them were well-to-do. Christian women have at all times counted it an honor to be able to serve their Master with their substance and with their service. We see here an emancipation of woman in the noblest sense of the word, and the beginning of the service of women in the Church of Christ, and at the same time a decided triumph of the evangelical spirit over the limitation of Jewish rabbinism.

The parable of the fourfold soil: V. 4. **And when much people were gathered together and were come to Him out of every city, He spake by a parable:** v. 5. **A sower went out to sow his seed; and as he sowed, some fell by the wayside; and it was trodden down, and the fowls of the air devoured it.** V. 6. **And some fell upon a rock; and as soon as it was sprung up, it withered away because it lacked moisture.** V. 7. **And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprang up with it and choked it.** V. 8. **And other fell on good ground, and sprang up, and bare fruit an hundredfold. And when He had said these things, He cried, He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.** The fame of Christ was still spreading so rapidly that people from all the cities and towns from near and far came together to see and hear Him. They came out to Him as He was on the shore of the Sea of Galilee, and He used a boat as His pulpit, in order that He might reach them all, Matt. 13, 2; Mark 4, 1. He spoke to the people of the mysteries of the kingdom of God through parables, of which one is given by Luke. There went out a sower to sow his seed. The picture is that of a farmer casting forth the seed broadcast over the land, every year with new diligence and hope, just as the long-suffering and kindness of the heavenly Sower does not become weary in spite of much apparently lost work, Is. 49, 4. His work is an example to the present day. "Every pious preacher, when he sees that things will not go forward, but seem to be growing worse, feels almost disgusted about his preaching, and yet he cannot and dare not desist, for the sake of even a few elect. And that is written for our consolation and admonition, that we should not be surprised or think it strange even though few people accept the benefit of our doctrine, and some even become worse. For commonly the preachers, especially when they are new and but recently come from the shop, believe that there should be success immediately, as soon as they have done speaking, and everything should be done and changed quickly. But that will miss the object far. The prophets and Christ Himself had that experience." 53) As the sower, in the patient work of his calling, cast his seed, some of it overshot the mark, falling on the path which crossed the field. This was a feature of the landscape in Palestine, that the paths between the various towns and hamlets followed the nearest way and the easiest slopes, without regard for grain-fields. The result was that the travelers that used the path trod the seed to pieces, and the winged animals of the air, the fowls, came and devoured it. Other grains fell upon the rock, upon rocky soil, where the bed-rock came to within a few inches of the surface. Here was moisture and warmth, the best conditions for quick germination, but not enough moisture and soil to support a growing plant. The stone below caught the heat of the sun, causing every bit of moisture in that spot to evaporate. Still other seeds fell into the midst of the thorns, where the preparation of the soil had not succeeded in grubbing out the roots of the weeds. When the seed, therefore, had sprouted, and the blades grew up, the hardier thorns absorbed both sun and air and thus choked the tender plants. Only the seed that fell upon the good soil fulfilled the farmer's hopes; it grew, not only into blades, but it formed heads which were filled with grain and matured with rich returns, up to an hundredfold. After having told this parable, Jesus added a warning and pleading word that the people should hear in truth, not only with the ears of the body, but also with their spiritual ears, to get the full understanding of the lesson which He wished to convey to them.

The explanation of the parable: V. 9. **And His disciples asked Him, saying, What might this parable be?** V. 10. **And He said, Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God, but to others in parables, that seeing they might not see, and hearing they might not understand.** V. 11. **Now the parable is this: The seed is the Word of God.** V. 12. **Those by the wayside are they that hear; then cometh the devil, and taketh away the Word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved.** V. 13. **They on the rock are they which, when they hear, receive the Word with joy; and these have no root, which for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away.** V. 14. **And that which fell among thorns are they which, when**

53) Luther, quoted in Besser, *Bibelstunden*, 1, 334.

they have heard, go forth, and are choked with cares and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to perfection. V. 15. **But that on the good ground are they which in an honest and good heart, having heard the Word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience.** The disciples at that time had as yet little spiritual knowledge and understanding. And so Jesus patiently explains to them the meaning of the parable, since to them it was given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God, not by their merit or worthiness, nor because they had been interested in Christ or His work by their own reason and strength. In case of the others, however, that did not want to believe, the parables served a different purpose. Seeing they should not see, and hearing they should not understand. The eyes of their bodies might behold all that was going on in miracles and other happenings, and yet they would not recognize the power of God, the Messiahship of Jesus. Their ears might hear the sounds of the words, but their meaning was hidden from them. What Isaiah had been obliged to say with regard to the hardening of Israel was being fulfilled, Is. 6, 9. 10. The judgment of God upon a disobedient people had begun in the days of Isaiah, and was completed in the days of Christ and the apostles. It is an earnest warning for all times, 2 Cor. 2, 15. 16; 4, 3. 4. Christ's explanation of the parable was brief and simple. The seed of which He speaks is the Word. That shall be strewn, that shall be scattered broadcast again and again, with patient labor. The first class of hearers are those by the wayside, hearers only. There is not even a chance for the Word to begin its saving influence in their case. The seed is lying on top of the hearts, and the devil takes it away, lest, believing, they should be saved. "Therefore He says that the devil comes and takes the Word from their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved. Which power of the devil not only signifies this, that the hearts, hardened by worldly ideas and life, lose the Word and let it escape, that they never understand it, but also that in the place of the Word of God the devil sends false teachers that tread it down with doctrines of men. For both is here given, that the seed is trodden down on the path and that it is eaten by the birds." 54) The second class of hearers are those that have a mere veneer, a shallow covering of Christianity. With them the "getting religion" is merely an incident, and they are able to change their profession like their clothes. There is no idea of indoctrination in their case; they are not firmly grounded and rooted in Scriptures. They are violent enthusiasts while it lasts, but the excitement does not last. For a time, and usually a short time, at that, they are prominently identified with the work of the Church. But then their interest flags and departs as suddenly as it came into being. In the time of temptation, when there seems to be danger of suffering for the sake of their convictions, they are no longer among those present. "The second class contains those that accept with joy, but they do not hold out. This is also a great crowd, that hear the Word properly and accept it in its purity, without any sects and schismatics and enthusiasts; they are glad also that they may know the right truth and find how we may be saved without works through faith; also because they have been delivered from the imprisonment of the Law, the conscience, and human doctrine. But when it comes to the battle, that they should on that account suffer harm, contempt, loss of life and goods, then they fall away and deny it all." 55) The third class includes such as also hear the Word, in whose hearts the seed finds a proper lodging. But later they, being taken possession of by the cares of riches and the pleasures of life, suffocate, so far as their faith is concerned, and do not bring their fruit to maturity. This is properly called suffocation, for the process is not brought to a climax at once, but takes much time. Very gradually the love of money and the deceitfulness of riches creeps into the heart; or just as unostentatiously the liking for the pleasures of this world takes possession of the mind, until the lingering spark of faith is extinguished almost without their noticing it. "The third class that hear and accept the Word and yet fall to the wrong side, that is, to the pleasure and ease of this life, also bring forth no fruit according to the Word. And their number is also very large; for though they do not establish heresies, as the first ones, but always have the pure Word, and also are not attacked on the left side by opposition and temptation, yet they fall on the right side, and that is their ruin, that they enjoy peace and good days. Therefore they do not earnestly regard the Word, but become lazy and sink into the care, riches, and lust of this life, that they are without use." 56) Only the last class of hearers, in whose case the seed of the Word falls into hearts that have been properly prepared by the preaching of the Law, is of value in the kingdom of God. There the meekness of the knowledge of self is replaced by the nobleness and generousness of the regenerated soul. The Word which they hear they also keep; they hold firmly to its glory and power, and are thus enabled to bring forth fruit well pleasing to God, with all perseverance.

Other parabolic sayings: V. 16. **No man, when he hath lighted a candle, covereth it with a vessel, or putteth it under a bed, but setteth it on a candlestick, that they which enter in may see the light.** V. 17. **For nothing is secret that shall not be**

54) Luther, 11, 516.

55) Luther, 11, 517.

56) Luther, 11, 518.

made manifest, neither anything hid that shall not be known and come abroad. V. 18. Take heed, therefore, how ye hear; for whosoever hath, to him shall be given; and whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he seemeth to have. These words seem to have been a favorite saying of Jesus, for He repeats them on various occasions, Matt. 5, 15; Mark 4, 21; chap. 11, 33. For any one to light a lamp and then hide it under some hollow vessel or place it under a bed or couch, when it is intended for a light to all that are in the house, would be foolish. It must rather be placed in a holder, on a candlestick; then all that come in may see the light, and it will serve its purpose. Even so people that have received Christianity into their hearts, that have the light of the Gospel shining in them, that have been given this light in order that its radiance may be shed also on others, must hide neither the light of their individual godliness nor that of the pure Gospel-preaching in such a way that no man can find out about it, not even if he inquired about it. There is a grave responsibility resting upon the believers of the pure Gospel in these last days of the world. For there is nothing hidden which shall not be revealed, nor is there anything covered over which is not bound to become known and be exhibited. The very object in hiding something precious is to bring it forth at some convenient time. And so Christianity and the Christian doctrine is a treasure which we should guard most carefully lest it be taken from us; but incidentally, we uncover this treasure at every opportunity and permit others to share in the wonderful riches of God's grace and mercy in Christ Jesus. From this fact arises the duty of Christians to be careful hearers. The responsibility is for them really to know, and not merely have a knowledge about, the light of the Gospel, the treasure of salvation. To the one that has Christian knowledge the Lord adds thereto, with compound interest reckoned daily; the constant study of the Word of the Gospel enriches the hearer and reader in a manner beyond the comprehension of even the well-grounded Christian. But if one is careless about his growth in Christian knowledge, then even that little which he foolishly believes himself to be possessing will be taken from him. A check in the growth of Christian faith amounts to the same thing as a frost in early fall: the plant is definitely harmed by the misfortune.

The true relatives of the Lord: **V. 19. Then came to Him His mother and His brethren, and could not come at Him for the press. V. 20. And it was told Him by certain which said, Thy mother and Thy brethren stand without, desiring to see Thee. V. 21. And He answered and said unto them, My mother and my brethren are these which hear the Word of God and do it.** In the narrative above Luke had combined the discourses of two different occasions. This explains the fact that he here relates the incident concerning the relatives of Jesus. Christ was busily engaged with His teaching when there came an interruption. His mother and His brothers (cousins or half-brothers) had come down with the intention of taking Him away for some time and giving Him a much-needed vacation. Though they tried to get into the house, they could not so much as come near Him on account of the great multitude that filled every bit of available space. So the request of His relatives was passed along, until finally Jesus was told by those nearest to Him that His mother and His brothers wanted to see Him. There was no doubt that they meant well, but their understanding of the Savior's work and ministry was very poor. And therefore their attempt, with all its implied kindness, was an unwarranted interference with the Lord's business. He did not go out to them, nor did He permit them to disturb Him. He was about His Father's business, and in the performance of those duties which had been given Him by His Father no man may disturb or hinder Him. Note: This is an example for us that we may not be discouraged or turned aside from our purpose when our work concerns the kingdom of God. Jesus here, after looking at His disciples that were sitting nearest to Him, gave an answer which could be transmitted to the waiting relatives: My mother and My brethren are these that hear and do the Word of God. The spiritual relationship with Christ through faith is far more intimate than any physical relationship possibly could be. It brings the believer into the closest communion with his Savior. John 15, 1—6.

The Storm on the Sea. Luke 8, 22—25.

V. 22. Now it came to pass on a certain day that He went into a ship with His disciples; and He said unto them, Let us go over unto the other side of the lake. And they launched forth. V. 23. But as they sailed, He fell asleep; and there came down a storm of wind on the lake; and they were filled with water, and were in jeopardy. V. 24. And they came to Him and awoke Him, saying, Master, Master, we perish. Then He arose, and rebuked the wind and the raging of the water; and they ceased, and there was a calm. V. 25. And He said unto them, Where is your faith? And they, being afraid, wondered, saying one to another, What manner of man is this! for He commandeth even the winds and water, and they obey Him. Cp. Matt. 8, 23—37; Mark 4, 35—41. It was at the close of a strenuous day that Jesus embarked in a boat with His disciples, and He gave the command to sail across the sea to the other side. The disciples, some of whom were expert navigators, having spent a large part of their life on the lake, immediately launched

forth, setting sail for the center of the lake. Jesus was a true man, with all the physical needs of a true man. So now, fatigued as He was with the strain of teaching and probably also with the sultriness, He fell into a deep sleep, though there was no comfortable couch aboard. Suddenly a tornadolike storm came down upon the lake, accompanied with such a turbulent upheaval of the waters of the sea that they rushed in upon them from all sides, filling the boat and placing them all in the greatest peril of their lives. And yet Jesus slept. The powers of nature are in His hand. They may storm and threaten, but they cannot harm Him. Note: If a Christian has Jesus with him in all his work and in all his play, then he is secure in spite of all threatenings of the enemies. Not a hair of his head may be harmed without the will of his Lord. The disciples were at their wits' end. They rushed over to Him, they awakened Him with the anxious call that they were perishing. And He heard their frantic cry and gave them such an exhibition of His almighty power that they must have felt the greatness of their unbelief on this account more than by the reproving words of the Lord. For He arose at once and threateningly spoke to the wind and to the surge of the waters. And they paused in the midst of their fury. At once their unleashed fierceness was replaced with an absolute calm. And then came the rebuke from the mouth of the Master, chiding their lack of faith. The effect upon the disciples, who had seen quite a number of wonderful deeds at His hands, was peculiar. They were filled with fear in the presence of such evidence of almighty power. At the same time they wondered that He who ordinarily appeared a mere man, who had but a few minutes ago lain in their midst in the sleep of utter exhaustion, could command the winds and the water, and exact absolute obedience from them. Jesus, true man, is at the same time the mighty God from heaven, the almighty Creator of the universe. People that trust in Him are assured of safety in the arms of Him whose providence governs even the death of a sparrow.

In the Country of the Gadarenes.

Luke 8, 26—39.

The demoniac: V. 26. **And they arrived at the country of the Gadarenes, which is over against Galilee.** V. 27. **And when He went forth to land, there met Him out of the city a certain man, which had devils long time, and ware no clothes, neither abode in any house, but in the tombs.** V. 28. **When he saw Jesus, he cried out, and fell down before Him, and with a loud voice said, What have I to do with Thee, Jesus, Thou Son of God Most High? I beseech Thee, torment me not.** V. 29. **(For He had commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man. For oftentimes it had caught him; and he was kept bound with chains and in fetters; and he brake the bands, and was driven of the devil into the wilderness.)** Cp. Matt. 8, 28—34; Mark 5, 1—20. Luke's description is graphic: They sailed down from the deep sea to the land. There was not the faintest indication of the recent tempest, and they had no difficulty about putting in near the shore. The country where they landed belonged to a strip of Gaulanitis, which was variously called the country of the Gadarenes or the Gerasenes, Gadara being a town farther inland, and Gerasa, or Gergesa, being situated near the Sea of Galilee. The strip of the country where the disciples cast anchor was comparatively wild and uninhabited, the hilly section just east of the lake, opposite Galilee. No sooner had Jesus set foot to the land, with the intention of going over to the city which was not far distant, than two demoniacs came toward Him, the more violent of whom Luke speaks of. The home of this unfortunate sufferer was in the city, but he himself was not living there at the present time, being possessed of demons, who tortured him in various ways. Their power over him was such as to make him spurn all shame; for a long time he had worn no clothes. He would also not remain in a house, but preferred to live in the tombs which were hewn into the rock on the lake shore. He had almost been stripped of the attributes of a human being, and rather resembled a wild beast in appearance and habits. No sooner, however, did he see Jesus than he screamed aloud and threw himself down at His feet and begged with a loud voice that Jesus should not torment him. That was the demon, one of their number speaking. The devil knows who Jesus of Nazareth is, was aware of it during the entire lifetime of Jesus, and tried everything in his power to frustrate the work of the Lord. If Christ had been a mere man, the devil could easily have conquered him. But He was the Son of the most high God, and therefore Himself true God from eternity. He had the power, if He so chose, to let the last terrible judgment upon the devils begin at any time, to chain them in the abyss of darkness and keep them there. The devil and his angels have been condemned by God, they are reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the Great Day, Jude, v. 6. The very fact that they are excluded from the bliss of heaven is for them a species of hell torture. In the mean time, however, and especially during these last days of the world, the devil is loosed for a little season, Rev. 20, 3. Until the Day of Judgment Satan and his demons still have permission to move here on earth and to torment God's creatures. But their chains are upon them. And on the Day of Judgment they will enter their eternal prison and feel the tortures of the fire which is prepared for the devil and his angels, Matt. 25, 41. For Jesus was about to command (conative imperfect) that the unclean spirit should come out

of the man, hence the cry of fear. The disease was not permanently and continually of a violent nature, but rather took hold of this victim with intermittent spells of acute mania, followed by intervals of comparative quiet and sensibility. But when the devils seized him in their powerful grip, all efforts at keeping him under guard were fruitless. People had tried to keep him bound and in subjection by means of fetters and chains on hands and feet, but these were like strips of gossamer in the hands of the demoniac. At such times the poor victim was driven into the deserts, and no one could hold him.

The healing: V. 30. **And Jesus asked him, saying, What is thy name? And he said, Legion; because many devils were entered into him.** V. 31. **And they besought Him that He would not command them to go out into the deep.** V. 32. **And there was there an herd of many swine feeding on the mountain; and they besought Him that He would suffer them to enter into them. And He suffered them.** V. 33. **Then went the devils out of the man, and entered into the swine; and the herd ran violently down a steep place into the lake, and were choked.** Since the man appeared to have a rational interval, Jesus asked him his name. The poor man being the victim, not only of one or of a few devils, answered accordingly that his name was Legion, thousands of demons having taken possession of him. But the devils were growing restive, knowing that their time for torturing this man was over. And so they pleaded with Christ not to commit them to the abyss, to the pit of hell. But there was a herd of many swine feeding on the side of the mountain, within easy distance of the place where Jesus had landed, and the devils eagerly begged Christ to permit them to enter into the dumb brutes. And when Jesus had given permission, the devils took possession of the swine. And the brutes, taken with a sudden spasm of fright, bolted down the precipice overhanging the lake, leaped down into the waves below, and were drowned, suffocation taking place in the water. Note: The devil is a murderer from the beginning. If he cannot destroy the souls of men, he tries to harm their bodies, and when this is denied him, he takes out his spite on the dumb animals. His one desire is to ruin the works of God. But he can do this only with God's permission. It is indeed a secret of God why He gives this permission. But it may be said, in general, that even such visitations, by which the devil works harm against us, are fatherly visitations of God, by means of which He wants to chastize us and call us to repentance.

The consequences: V. 34. **When they that fed them saw what was done, they fled, and went and told it in the city and in the country.** V. 35. **Then they went out to see what was done; and came to Jesus, and found the man out of whom the devils were departed sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed, and in his right mind; and they were afraid.** V. 36. **They also which saw it told them by what means he that was possessed of the devils was healed.** V. 37. **Then the whole multitude of the country of the Gadarenes round about besought Him to depart from them; for they were taken with great fear; and He went up into the ship, and returned back again.** V. 38. **Now the man out of whom the devils were departed besought Him that he might be with Him; but Jesus sent him away, saying,** v. 39. **Return to thine own house, and show how great things God hath done unto thee. And he went his way, and published throughout the whole city how great things Jesus had done unto him.** The swineherds were taken by surprise at this strange action of the animals entrusted to them. When this supernatural thing happened before their eyes, they fled and brought the news to the people of the district, both in city and country, wherever such lived as owned some of the drowned swine. They knew or felt that there must be some connection between the coming of Jesus and His speaking to the demoniac and the misfortune which struck the entire countryside. And the people, undoubtedly with some resentment, went out to the spot to see what had happened. They came to Jesus, not in a gentle, receptive, but in an aggressive mood. They found many things which should have set them to thinking and praising God. He that formerly roamed over the country without rest was now quietly sitting at the feet of Jesus; he that formerly was plagued with the devils was now freed from that scourge; he that had scorned shame and clothing was now fully dressed; he that had been a raving maniac was in full possession of rational powers of thinking and speaking. The feeling of the presence of the supernatural took hold of them all, and they were afraid. They did not learn the lesson which was held before them; they did not realize that this was a time of gracious visitation for them. Neither did they understand when those that were present told them how the demoniac had been delivered from his terrible condition. This rather increased their superstitious terror, they were possessed with a great fear, they were panic-stricken. And the entire countryside, as one man, arose and begged Jesus to leave their coasts. Their pigs, in their eyes, exceeded both the value of the one former demoniac and of the Prophet of their salvation. Note: Even today there are many people that neglect Jesus, the Savior of their souls, and His holy Word, for the sake of some petty earthly property. People act as though there were always plenty of time for preparing for death and for believing in Jesus after their hoard has grown large enough for their greed, forgetting, meanwhile, that the time of grace may never come again.

Jesus complied with their request, since for Him to stay in the country under the present circumstances would have been foolish. He entered into the boat and returned to Galilee. But when the healed man begged Him that he might join Him and become one of the disciples that were always with Jesus, He denied the request. The Lord wanted a witness of His power in these parts. And since they did not want Him, this man would be the best substitute, as he would speak from personal experience and conviction. It was good for the man that he should return to his home and people, and tell them all that had befallen him through the mercy of God. The man, following the order of Christ, promptly became a missionary throughout the city and region, declaring what Jesus had done for him. His faith would not permit him to remain silent; he must needs declare the great works of God. Every Christian has received such wonderful gifts of God in and through Christ, though perhaps not in the body, yet surely in the soul. And it behooves every one that loves the Lord Jesus to speak of the great things which God has done for him, as far as his personal influence reaches.

The Woman with an Issue and the Daughter of Jairus. Luke 8, 40—56.

The plea of Jairus: V. 40. **And it came to pass that, when Jesus was returned, the people gladly received Him; for they were all waiting for Him.** V. 41. **And, behold, there came a man named Jairus, and he was a ruler of the synagog; and he fell down at Jesus' feet, and besought Him that He would come into his house;** v. 42. **for he had one only daughter, about twelve years of age, and she lay a dying. But as He went, the people thronged Him.** The return of Jesus to Galilee was apparently hailed with delight by the majority of the people, though the scribes and Pharisees were again a thorn in the flesh, Matt. 9, 18. Whether they had expected the Lord to come back this soon or not, they were eager to see Him. Their minds were turned toward Him, mainly on account of the recent healings, for but few of them realized His real office. Their carnal hopes concerning a Messiah with an earthly kingdom were still dominant in their hearts. But now a man by the name of Jairus, an elder of the local synagog, came to Him, greatly excited. Falling down at the feet of Jesus, he begged Him most earnestly to come into his house, for his daughter, an only child of about twelve years, was dying, yea, as Matthew relates, she may even now be dead. Luke adds that when Jesus turned to go away, the great multitudes thronged Him to suffocation.

The sick woman: V. 43. **And a woman having an issue of blood twelve years, which had spent all her living upon physicians, neither could be healed of any,** v. 44. **came behind Him, and touched the border of His garment; and immediately her issue of blood stanched.** V. 45. **And Jesus said, Who touched Me? When all denied, Peter and they that were with him said, Master, the multitude throng Thee and press Thee, and sayest Thou, Who touched Me?** V. 46. **And Jesus said, Somebody hath touched Me; for I perceive that virtue is gone out of Me.** V. 47. **And when the woman saw that she was not hid, she came trembling, and falling down before Him, she declared unto Him before all the people for what cause she had touched Him, and how she was healed immediately.** V. 48. **And He said unto her, Daughter, be of good comfort; thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace.** This thronging of the crowd, which Luke emphasizes so strongly, was taken advantage of by a certain woman. She had been in the sickness of a flux of blood, surrounded by this misery, for the space of twelve years. This issue rendered her Levitically unclean, Lev. 15, 25—30, and deprived her of many of the rights and privileges of the other members of the congregation. She had made every effort to be cured, to the extent of giving up to the doctors, expending upon physicians, all her living, all her means. And yet, as even Luke the physician writes, she could not be healed of any of them. A true picture of human misery and helplessness! This woman, coming from behind in the crowd, touched the hem or tassel of Christ's mantle, which He wore according to Jewish custom. This was not an act of superstition, but of faith. Her humility and sensitiveness merely kept her from making her condition public. And her faith was rewarded: at once the flow of blood was stopped, the healing was complete. Jesus, who, of course, was perfectly aware of the entire incident, determined to test the woman. Turning around, He asked who had touched Him. The remark was addressed chiefly to the disciples, and they, and the others near them, denied any wilful jolting. And, upon second thought, Peter, acting as spokesman for the rest, reminded the Lord that He was hemmed in and squeezed by the crowds on all sides, therefore the question seemed strange. But Jesus, with His object in mind, insisted that some one had deliberately and intentionally touched Him. Then the woman saw that her secret was no secret before Christ, and therefore she came and confessed the entire matter fully. And with happy heart she dwelt upon the fact of her having been cured at once, when the virtue had gone out from Him, as He had said, when the divine, miraculous power was given by Jesus as a reward of her faith. Hereupon Jesus, ever kind and sympathetic, gave her the further assurance that her faith had brought her the priceless boon of health. He takes great pleasure in commending again and again the qualities of faith, by which it is

able to do such great things. Her health was a reward of grace for the firmness of her trust. She should not fear or be uneasy in her mind over the incident, but go to her home in peace. Note: Such faith is needed in the Church and in its individual members even to-day; there is too much stereotyped sameness in the lives of the church-members in merely moving along a broad Christian way. Victories of faith are not so frequent in our days because the conquering faith is absent.

The raising of the daughter of Jairus: V. 49. **While He yet spake, there cometh one from the ruler of the synagog's house, saying to him, Thy daughter is dead; trouble not the Master. V. 50. But when Jesus heard it, He answered him, saying, Fear not; believe only, and she shall be made whole. V. 51. And when He came into the house, He suffered no man to go in save Peter and James and John, and the father and the mother of the maiden. V. 52. And all wept, and bewailed her; but He said, Weep not; she is not dead, but sleepeth. V. 53. And they laughed Him to scorn, knowing that she was dead. V. 54. And He put them all out, and took her by the hand, and called, saying, Maid, arise. V. 55. And her spirit came again, and she arose straightway; and He commanded to give her meat. V. 56. And her parents were astonished; but He charged them that they should tell no man what was done.** The matter with the woman had delayed Jesus for some time, and this was altogether in line with His plans. For now one of the servants of the ruler of the synagog came and told Jairus that his daughter had really died, adding that he should no longer vex the Master, should in no way bother Him any more. All help was now too late. But Jesus wanted to strengthen the faith of the distracted father, and therefore calmly told him: Fear not, only believe. Mistrust, suspicion, fear is an enemy of faith. For faith demands a trust with all the heart, with all the soul, and with all the mind. Even when the last breath has been drawn and one of our loved ones lies quiet in death, even then trust must not be thrown away. Faith reaches beyond the grave. In the house of Jairus everything was in commotion. The official mourners had arrived as early as this and were making the day hideous with their noises, with their weeping and wailing. And when Jesus sternly bade them desist from their weeping, they called out to Him in derision, knowing that the girl had really died. But Jesus cleared the house, taking only the parents and three of His disciples into the room where the child lay dead. He there took hold of her hand, saying, at the same time, in the Aramaic language: Maid, arise. And at once her spirit, which had left her body, returned to her. She could get up immediately. She was returned to complete health. She needed food, probably having been without it for some time during the sickness, and she was able to take it. The parents were extremely amazed at the miracle which was done before their eyes to their beloved daughter. But Christ retained His calm manner, merely impressing upon them the necessity of keeping the fact for themselves. He wanted no advertising of this miracle, especially not at this time. Jesus of Nazareth has life in Himself and gives it to whomsoever He will. With His human voice He called back this girl from death. The human nature of Christ possesses the full powers of life also in the state of humiliation. Therefore we have in Jesus, the Savior, a Lord that can and does deliver from death. When Christ, our Life, will be revealed on that Great Day, then He, by His almighty voice, will call us and all the dead out of the grave, and will give to all believers in Him eternal, glorious life.

Summary. *Jesus, continuing His ministry in Galilee, teaches in parables, calms the storm on the sea, heals a demoniac in the country of the Gadarenes, cures the woman with an issue, and raises the daughter of Jairus.*

CHAPTER 9.

The Mission of the Twelve. Luke 9, 1—9.

Rules for the apostles: V. 1. **Then He called His twelve disciples together, and gave them power and authority over all devils, and to cure diseases. V. 2. And He sent them to preach the kingdom of God and to heal the sick. V. 3. And He said unto them, Take nothing for your journey, neither staves, nor scrip, neither bread, neither money; neither have two coats apiece. V. 4. And whatsoever house ye enter into, there abide, and thence depart. V. 5. And whosoever will not receive you, when ye go out of that city, shake off the very dust from your feet for a testimony against them. V. 6. And they departed and went through the towns, preaching the Gospel and healing everywhere.** Jesus had chosen the Twelve out of the larger company of the disciples that usually followed Him. These Twelve, commonly designated by that term, He called together for a formal meeting. He gave them power and right, or authority, unlimited authority, as His representatives. Although the message which Jesus brought was not new, the form and clearness in which He brought it was. The apostles therefore, going out in His name, must be clothed with unusual power. The demons were made subject to them, and the power to heal diseases was transmitted

to them. Note that these two are mentioned separately, and that their treatment was not the same: The demons were to be cast out, the diseases were to be healed. Then, with all due formality, they were sent out, the substance, the essential part of their ministry being the preaching of the kingdom of God, supplemented by works of healing. The Gospel-message must always stand first in the kingdom of God and receive the prime attention; upon its proper proclamation all other activities of the Church depend. Some of the detailed instructions follow. The apostles were to take nothing for their journey; they were not to prepare themselves, and, above all, they were not to be burdened on the way. They were to show no characteristics of the itinerant begging preachers and prophets, having neither a staff nor a beggar's collecting bag, neither bread nor silver money, nor even a change of tunics with them. They were to be dependent altogether upon the people whom they served for their sustenance. They should lose no time in selecting a place to stay, in hunting choice quarters. The house into which they should enter first and whose inmates would receive them, that should be their abode until they had finished their work in that city. But if some people would reject them and their message, they should express the judgment of Christ upon the people of such a city by an appropriate gesture, by shaking off the very dust from their feet, signifying that they would have nothing to do with such opposition to the Word and work of Christ, but hereby bore witness before God against them. This, in brief, was the sum and substance of the instructions given to the apostles by Jesus. And, armed with this authority, they went forth through the towns of Galilee. In the most important place they put the preaching of the Gospel, the good news of salvation; and this proclamation of the Word was given the proper emphasis under the circumstances by the healings which were done everywhere.

Herod's interest in Jesus: V. 7. **Now Herod the tetrarch heard of all that was done by Him; and he was perplexed, because that it was said of some that John was risen from the dead;** v. 8. **and of some, that Elias had appeared; and of others, that one of the old prophets was risen again.** V. 9. **And Herod said, John have I beheaded; but who is this of whom I hear such things? And he desired to see Him.** Herod was at this time probably living at Tiberias, a city which he had practically rebuilt to fit in with his great plans. Rumors of the activity of a certain rabbi in Galilee may have reached the tetrarch of this province before, but he was too busy with his profligate life to pay much attention to them. But here, in the very region in which many of the greatest miracles of Jesus were performed, the courtiers of Herod supplied him with information concerning the movement among the people, probably not without a hint as to its possible dangerousness, for the Herodian party was strong. The news of the great Prophet bothered Herod, it embarrassed him, it placed him in a quandary; he did not know what to make of it. Various reports came to his ears, some saying that John had risen from the dead; others, that Elijah had been revealed, for their understanding of Mal. 4, 5 was of the real Elijah; still others, that one of the old prophets had risen again. Herod's conscience was pricking him, for he had been guilty of murder, a fact which is here merely referred to briefly. Herod knew that he had beheaded John in the prison, for the sake of his stepdaughter Salome, and now that this Prophet had arisen, with a message so much like that of the Baptist, he brooded on the matter and was anxious to see Jesus, in order that he might be satisfied as to His identity. Herod's position and manner of acting is that of a great many people that do not wish to break entirely with the Church. They may, under circumstances, hear a sermon and even form a liking for some preacher. But when they are placed before the choice: Christ or the world, they choose the latter. But their conscience will give them no rest; in the midst of all apparent happiness their defection gives them no peace. God is not mocked.

The Feeding of the Five Thousand.

Luke 9, 10—17.

The retirement of the apostles: V. 10. **And the apostles, when they were returned, told Him all that they had done. And He took them, and went aside privately into a desert place belonging to the city called Bethsaida.** V. 11. **And the people, when they knew it, followed Him; and He received them, and spake unto them of the kingdom of God, and healed them that had need of healing.** When the apostles returned from their first missionary journey, they related to the Lord in detail what they had done and what success they had had. They had labored with all the enthusiasm of beginners; it had been a strenuous experience for them. And therefore Jesus took them along with Him, He withdrew with them alone into the neighborhood of the city Bethsaida Julias, on the northeast coast of the Sea of Galilee, not far from the river Jordan. Note: It is altogether well-pleasing to the Lord if one of His servants, after a period of strenuous activity in the interest of the kingdom of God, withdraws for a time and gains new physical strength for the new demands awaiting him. But the withdrawal of Jesus did not remain undiscovered. The multitudes found out about it, and, some of them having noticed the direction in which He sailed, they followed afoot around the north end of the lake. So the recess of Jesus was of but short duration, since His kind heart would not turn from the people after their long jour-

ney to find Him. He willingly received the multitude, and He began speaking to them, and continued for the larger part of the day, on His favorite topic, the kingdom of God, what it means, and how they might enter into it. And all those that were in need of His healing hand He did not disappoint, but ministered unto them with all the compassion and power of His Savior's heart. Note: Jesus always has time for us; our prayers are never unwelcome to Him; His ear is always inclined to those that put their trust in Him, whether it be in matters concerning this world or that to come.

The miracle of the loaves and the fish: V. 12. **And when the day began to wear away, then came the Twelve and said unto Him, Send the multitude away that they may go into the towns and country round about, and lodge, and get victuals; for we are here in a desert place.** V. 13. **But He said unto them, Give ye them to eat. And they said, We have no more but five loaves and two fishes; except we should go and buy meat for all this people.** V. 14. **For they were about five thousand men. And He said to His disciples, Make them sit down by fifties in a company.** V. 15. **And they did so, and made them all sit down.** V. 16. **Then He took the five loaves and the two fishes, and looking up to heaven, He blessed them, and brake, and gave to the disciples to set before the multitude.** V. 17. **And they did eat, and were all filled; and there was taken up of fragments that remained to them twelve baskets.** Jesus had been busy preaching and healing without ceasing all day long. But now the day began to decline, to draw near its close, bringing an unwelcome interruption in the Lord's beneficent labors. The apostles felt it their duty to interfere at this point. They urged Jesus to dismiss the people, to send them away. The place where they were was an uninhabited region; but there were towns, Bethsaida Julias itself and other small hamlets, within walking distance round about; there the people might go and find places to lodge and also provisions for themselves. The disciples were not yet filled with the love for others which recognizes no sacrifice and sternly represses all selfishness. Their words rather express a certain peevishness as though they had been bothered long enough by these unwelcome guests. But Jesus gives them a lesson, both as to hospitality and trust in Him. He suggested immediately that the disciples be hosts to the multitudes. But their faces fell at the mere suggestion. They had, by some exploration, ascertained that there were five loaves and two fishes as provisions; that was the entire stock. And they add: Unless perhaps we are to go and buy food for the whole people. Neither their words nor their tone implied that they relished the idea very strongly or were very fond of the prospect. One of them had even figured out that the amount of money on hand would not be sufficient to buy bread for all those present, since there were some five thousand men present, without the women and children. And all this fuss and excitement with Jesus standing before them, of whom they knew and had the evidence of their senses that He was able to help at all times, even when death had laid his cold hands on a person and driven away the living soul. The disciples certainly do not appear to good advantage in this story. Note: This same lack of faith is found all too often in the Christians of these latter days. Worry and care for the body is all too apt to take the place of firm and undoubting trust in the providence and goodness of Christ and our heavenly Father. "That is the great fault that we, also in our days, not only on account of food, but also in manifold troubles and temptations feel that we know well how to figure out what we need, and how these needs should be met and help given to us. But if it is not there quickly as we like it, then nothing remains of our figuring but discontent and sadness. And it would be far better if we would leave God to deal with the situation and would not think of what we need." 57)

But Jesus now took the matter in hand. He had His disciples command the people to recline on the grass which grew at that place, in dining parties, or companies, of fifty each. He was preparing to spread a banquet before them. Then He took the five loaves and the two fishes, and, looking up to heaven, He spoke a blessing upon them, He blessed the food. Then He broke both bread and fishes into smaller pieces and gave these to His disciples, who acted as His waiters upon this momentous occasion. And all ate, and all were filled, they were fully satisfied, they had all they wanted to eat. And then, at Christ's command, that which was left over to them that ate, the fragments, were picked up, and these filled twelve large baskets. Christ here appears again as the almighty Lord and Creator of heaven and earth, upon whom the eyes of all creatures wait, that He may give them their food in due season. There is a world of comfort for Christians in the fact that Jesus, to whom we owe the salvation and life of our soul, also has the food for every day in His hand and will give us our daily bread every day. We are taken care of in body and soul.

Peter's Confession and Christ's Answer.

Luke 9, 18—27.

The confession of Peter and the Twelve: V. 18. **And it came to pass, as He was alone praying, His disciples were with Him; and He asked them, saying, Whom say the people that I am?** V. 19. **They answering said, John the Baptist; but some say, Elias; and others say that one of the old**

57) Luther, quoted in Stoeckhardt, *Biblische Geschichte des Neuen Testaments*, 124.

prophets is risen again. V. 20. **He said unto them, But whom say ye that I am? Peter answering said, The Christ of God.** V. 21. **And He straitly charged them, and commanded them to tell no man that thing,** v. 22. **saying, The Son of Man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be slain, and be raised the third day.** It was some time before Jesus was able to withdraw from the neighborhood of the Sea of Galilee and find time for rest and uninterrupted intercourse with His disciples. But when the occasion offered, He gladly availed Himself of the opportunity, traveling up into the northern part of Gaulanitis. Here He had leisure for prayer. And here He could speak to His disciples alone, to the Twelve that were with Him. And after some time He tested them with a searching question, not so much to determine the state of their faith (for His omniscience knew that) as to have them make an open confession. He asked first what the people in general said of Him, whom they believed Him to be. And the disciples answered what rumors were afloat regarding the Lord's identity, as in vv. 7 and 8. But now came the Lord's test question as to their own personal conviction. He addressed them all, but Peter gave the answer for them. Boldly and gladly he cried out: The Christ of God. That was saying that they had learned to know their Master as the promised Messiah, the Anointed One of God, that they believed Him to be the One through whom the salvation of the world was to come. This knowledge was indeed still mixed with a good deal of carnal understanding. But it was a wonderful thing that they had made at least so much headway. Jesus therefore accepted the confession and commended them for it, but He also immediately made an effort to lead their thoughts into the right channel concerning His office. Gravely and emphatically admonishing them not to make this fact known among the people at large, lest their false understanding of the work of the Messiah precipitate a crisis, He gave them a prophecy concerning the purpose of His coming into the world, the first prediction of His Passion. He told them that He, the Son of Man, must, that the divine obligation was resting upon Him to suffer much and to be rejected officially by the leaders of the Jewish Church and to be put to death, but also to rise again on the third day. Here the principal moments in the great Passion are given. His fate was sealed when the high priests and elders and scribes, the members of the Sanhedrin at Jerusalem, declared such a person excommunicated that would declare his adherence to Jesus. The people were too easily cowed. Many believed in their hearts that Jesus was a prophet and the Messiah Himself, but they did not dare to make an open declaration of their faith, and so matters went on through the great suffering to His death. Only one thing the Jewish leaders had not taken into consideration, the rising on the third day, which upset all their fine calculations, and proved Christ the Victor, the Son of God with power.

The cross-bearing of the disciples: V. 23. **And He said to them all, If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me.** V. 24. **For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever will lose his life for My sake, the same shall save it.** V. 25. **For what is a man advantaged if he gain the whole world and lose himself, or be cast away?** V. 26. **For whosoever shall be ashamed of Me and of My words, of him shall the Son of Man be ashamed when He shall come in His own glory and in His Father's and of the holy angels.** V. 27. **But I tell you of a truth, there be some standing here which shall not taste of death till they see the kingdom of God.** Christian discipleship is not all receiving and rejoicing, it involves also work and sacrifice. He that believes on Christ and wants to follow Him must deny his natural self, must give up his own natural wishes, desires, and inclinations, and must patiently take upon himself all the sufferings and hardships which his confession of Christ will bring upon him. That is the Christian's cross, not a physical one like Christ's, but none the less real and burdensome. The Lord explains the necessity. He that wants to save His life, the life in this world with its pleasures, he will lose the true life for all eternity; for the only real life is that in communion with Christ. But he that denies his old sinful self for the sake of Christ, crucifies his flesh with all lusts and desires, he will find and save his soul, he will possess it as an eternal gain, he will have eternal life as his reward of grace. For what gain has a person if he bring the whole world into his possession, but in doing so destroys himself and brings damnation upon himself? The entire world with all its glories and riches cannot outweigh the value of a single soul. Knowing this, the true disciples of Christ will deny themselves and also the world. Every man's heart is attached to the treasures, the joys, the delights of this world. And therefore denial of self includes denial of the world. Whosoever here in this world has served the world, has been a slave of the lusts of the world, will receive the judgment of damnation on the last day. Of him the Son of Man will be ashamed when He returns in all His glory with all His holy angels. But those that in this life served Christ faithfully, and proved their faith by denial of self and of the world, will enter into that glory which God has prepared for them that love Him. But to His apostles Jesus solemnly says that there are some of them that will not taste of death, will not be taken away by death before they have seen the kingdom of God. The day when God poured out His wrath

upon Jerusalem is the dawn of the coming of Christ in glory. And some of the apostles, like John, lived to see the destruction of Jerusalem, and thus became witnesses of the truth of Christ's words and of the inexorable punishment which comes upon those that deny Him.

The Transfiguration. Luke 9, 28—36.

The miracle itself: V. 28. **And it came to pass, about an eight days after these sayings, He took Peter and John and James, and went up into a mountain to pray.** V. 29. **And as He prayed, the fashion of His countenance was altered, and His raiment was white and glistering.** V. 30. **And, behold, there talked with Him two men, which were Moses and Elias,** v. 31. **who appeared in glory, and spake of His decease which He should accomplish at Jerusalem.** V. 32. **But Peter and they that were with Him were heavy with sleep; and when they were awake, they saw His glory, and the two men that stood with Him.** After these things had happened, after Peter had spoken the confession in the name of all the disciples, a matter of about eight days, on the eighth day after, Jesus took Peter and John and James along with Him. He wanted to give them visual evidence and proof that He was truly the Son of the living God. He ascended the mountain with them, the highest mountain in the neighborhood where they were at that time, a mountain well known to all of them. The Lord's purpose was to pray, to enter into intimate communion with His heavenly Father, for the purpose of getting wisdom and strength for His coming difficult work, for the Galilean ministry was drawing to a close, and the days of the Judean ministry would be short. And God revealed Himself in a remarkable manner to His Son. For while Jesus was engaged in prayer, His entire aspect changed. The appearance of His face became unlike His usual self, and all His clothing became white and resplendent, shining, flashing like lightning. And suddenly there were two men that appeared and were engaged in conversation with the Lord, namely, Moses and Elijah. In the case of the first, only God knew his grave, and as for the second, the Lord took him up to heaven outright. Moses had given the Law and was the great exponent of the Old Testament covenant, and Elijah had been zealous for the Law and suffered much for his faithfulness. Both of them had looked forward with eager longing to the coming of the Messiah. And now that the Christ had appeared on earth and was engaged in the work of His ministry, God permitted and caused these men to appear to Jesus on the mountain before the amazed eyes of the three apostles. Thus Peter and the others were witnesses of the glory of Jesus, 2 Pet. 1, 16. The divine glory, which He otherwise bore hidden before the eyes of men and only occasionally made manifest in word and deed, this glory now shone forth through His weak flesh, imparting to it that wonderful majesty which it was destined to bear at all times after entering into the final glory. Meanwhile, Peter and the other men were almost overwhelmed by the glory of the revelation; the brightness and the wonder of it all affected them so that they were as if heavy with sleep; they could barely manage to open their eyes from time to time. They heard only that Moses and Elijah were conversing with Jesus concerning His going out of this life, concerning the consummation of His ministry, which was to be fulfilled at Jerusalem and take place through suffering and death. And sometimes, when they roused themselves for a few moments, the disciples caught sight of the glory of their Master and of the two prophets that were standing with Him.

The voice from heaven: V. 33. **And it came to pass, as they departed from Him, Peter said unto Jesus, Master, it is good for us to be here; and let us make three tabernacles, one for Thee and one for Moses and one for Elias; not knowing what he said.** V. 34. **While he thus spake, there came a cloud and overshadowed them; and they feared as they entered into the cloud.** V. 35. **And there came a voice out of the cloud, saying, This is My beloved Son: hear Him.** V. 36. **And when the voice was past, Jesus was found alone. And they kept it close, and told no man in those days any of those things which they had seen.** Moses and Elijah, having spoken those things for which they were sent, departed to make way for a still greater manifestation of glory. But in the interval, while they were withdrawing, Peter regained full consciousness for a moment, though he was still dazed with the wonder of what he had seen. He was filled with a peculiar ecstasy, with the joy characteristic of the great festivals of the Jews, especially of that of the Feast of Tabernacles. He was loath to see the visitors from heaven depart, and therefore proposed to build three tabernacles, one for Christ, one for Moses, and one for Elijah, that the communion thus begun might continue indefinitely, and the disciples might be witnesses of the heavenly glory for an indefinite length of time. But, as the evangelist says, Peter was not clear in his mind as to what he was really saying. The entire happening on the Mount of Transfiguration was for Christ a taste and pledge of the glorification which should be His after His final great Passion. For the disciples it was to be a strengthening of their faith in view of the days through which they would be obliged to pass, days of severest trial and tribulation. But to all that believe in Christ and share the persecutions which come upon the believers for His sake, the future transfiguration and glorification is here pictured. "This revelation shows that this life is nothing in comparison with that to come, which will surely fall to the lot

of those that have died to the world in Christ. And we owe it to God to thank Him with sincere praise that He thus far humiliated Himself to reveal such glory to us, and that He wanted to make us sure of the hope of the life to come by means of such a beautiful, open, and mighty revelation." 58)

While Peter was still speaking these words, there came a cloud, not a dark and dreary mass, but one refulgent with heavenly brightness. So obvious was this feature that the poor, sinful mortals instinctively shrank back and were filled with fear as they entered into the cloud. Here was such a cloud of glory as that which filled the Most Holy Place of the tabernacle and the Temple when the Lord wanted to speak to the children of Israel. But whereas in those days there was only the lid of the ark of the covenant that served as a type of the things to come, now the great Mercy-seat Himself was in the midst of the cloud of God's glory, surrounded with heavenly brightness. And now came the revelation of God the Father, who spoke out of the cloud as a witness for His Son: This is My Son, the Chosen One; hear Him, give obedience to Him. Hereby the prophetic dignity of the High Priest of the New Testament was raised above even that of the elect prophets of old. Beside Him even the highest, greatest, and best of mortals falls away into insignificance: Jesus must be all in all. As soon as the voice had been heard, Jesus was found alone and in His former lowly appearance, that of a servant. All traces of the heavenly glory had been removed. But the disciples had heard what they were to do. They had the Word of Jesus, the Word of the Gospel; this they should hold fast, to this they should render obedience. We Christians need not worry because the bodily presence of Christ has been removed from us; for we also have the Word and Jesus in the Word in all the glory of His wonderful love unto our salvation. In obedience to a command of Christ the three disciples kept silence concerning this wonderful revelation in those days. They did not speak of this experience until after the resurrection of Christ.

The Healing of the Epileptic Boy.

Luke 9, 37—45.

The miracle: V. 37. **And it came to pass that on the next day, when they were come down from the hill, much people met Him.** V. 38. **And, behold, a man of the company cried out, saying, Master, I beseech Thee, look upon my son; for he is mine only child.** V. 39. **And, lo, a spirit taketh him, and he suddenly crieth out; and it teareth him that he foameth again, and, bruising him, hardly departeth from him.** V. 40. **And I besought Thy disciples to cast him out, and they could not.** V. 41. **And Jesus, answering, said, O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you and suffer you? Bring thy son hither.** V. 42. **And as he was yet a-coming, the devil threw him down and tare him. And Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit, and healed the child, and delivered him again to his father.** Since Luke is writing for heathen Christians, He omits almost all reference to the Pharisees and Sadducees, as his readers would have followed him only with difficulty. In this story, also, there is no reference to the quarrel which the disciples had with the leaders of the Jews, the story only being given. Jesus had been on the mountain over night. But when He came down on the next day with His three disciples, He came upon an excited scene. In the first place, a great many people came to meet Him. And out of the crowd, as it drew near, one man came forward and cried to Him with a loud voice, in a pitiful prayer. He wanted Jesus to look upon his only son, with a view to helping him. From time to time it would happen that an evil spirit would take hold upon him, and the boy would suddenly scream with pain. The demon, meanwhile, would distort and tear him until froth would appear at the mouth, and even after bruising the child fiercely, he would barely withdraw for a time. It was a case of severe epilepsy and lunacy caused by an evil spirit. The poor father had pleaded with the disciples that had remained in the valley whether they could help in this emergency, but they had not been able. The cry of Jesus at this point: O unbelieving and perverse generation; people that have no faith and consistently go the wrong way! How long must I be with you and tolerate you? includes the people as a whole, also the father of the boy and, in a way, the disciples, as He told them afterwards. That was characteristic of the chosen people of God at that time: they were rejecting the Messiah of their salvation or following false leads and hopes in their dream of a temporal kingdom. Jesus then commanded the boy to be brought to Him. While the boy was approaching Jesus, in accordance with His command, the demon made a final assault on his victim, rending and convulsing him. Note: It is very probable that certain severe attacks of sickness, such as cramps, convulsions, epilepsy, lunacy, and others, even to-day are caused or aggravated by the devil. He is a murderer from the beginning and has only one thing in mind, to destroy the creatures of God. But the power of the evil spirit also in this case, as in all, goes only so far as Jesus permits it. For Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit, and healed the boy, and gave him back to his father.

The second prediction: V. 43. **And they were all amazed at the mighty power of God. But while they wondered, every one,**

58) Luther, quoted in Stoeckhardt, *Biblische Geschichte des Neuen Testaments*, 148.

at all things which Jesus did, He said unto His disciples, v. 44. **Let these sayings sink down into your ears; for the Son of Man shall be delivered into the hands of men.** V. 45. **But they understood not this saying, and it was hid from them, that they perceived it not; and they feared to ask Him of that saying.** The people were greatly astonished at the majesty of God, revealed in the power that could work such a cure. This majesty is the essence of Jesus, it is given to Him as man, in the state of humiliation. He is true God and eternal Life. But while they were all wondering about the great deed which Jesus had performed, He took His disciples aside and spoke to them privately, affirming once more that they should set into their ears the words which He was now telling them, that they should remember them and get their understanding: It will be done that the Son of Man will be delivered into the hands of men. This is a certainty; and He wanted His disciples to become accustomed to the thought that such was the fulfilment of the Old Testament prophecies. But, as Luke remarks in a pitying aside, they did not understand this saying, and it was totally hidden from them to the extent that they did not have the faintest understanding of it. At the same time, they were afraid to ask Him with regard to this saying of His. The evidence of His ineffable majesty had stood out so strongly in His recent miracle that the disciples could not muster the courage to question Him on the matter.

Lessons in Humility. Luke 9, 46—56.

The question as to the greatest: V. 46. **Then there arose a reasoning among them which of them should be greatest.** V. 47. **And Jesus, perceiving the thought of their heart, took a child and set him by Him,** v. 48. **and said unto them, Whosoever shall receive this child in My name receiveth Me; and whosoever shall receive Me receiveth Him that sent Me; for he that is least among you, the same shall be great.** Just how great the spiritual denseness of the disciples was even at that time, appears from this incident. For while Jesus was concerned about the work of salvation, about the woe and weal of the whole world, the apostles were bickering, in petty jealousy, about rank in their own midst. There was a regular altercation about the question in their circle on this trifling matter. Luke does not relate that Jesus asked them about their dispute, being content to point out the lesson which Jesus taught. The Master took a little child and placed it beside Him as He was standing in their midst, telling them that by receiving this little child they would receive Him, and therefore also Him that sent Him. The little and insignificant in the eyes of the world is great in the eyes of Jesus, if there is faith to be found. And then He states the great paradox, the apparent contradiction which holds true in the kingdom of God: He that is smaller than all, he is great in the kingdom of God. He that is satisfied with the humblest, lowest position, if he can but serve the Master, he has the true qualities that make for greatness, and will be acknowledged in that way by Christ Himself.

An interruption by John: V. 49. **And John answered and said, Master, we saw one casting out devils in Thy name; and we forbade him because he followeth not with us.** V. 50. **And Jesus said unto him, Forbid him not; for he that is not against us is for us.** The claim has been made that this is an unnatural transition, and that this incident is in the false place. But it fits very nicely. The present subject was by no means a pleasant one, and John thought by introducing this story he would change the subject and also earn some commendation. John tells the Lord that either on their missionary journey or more recently, some of them, probably he and James, had seen a man casting out devils in the name of Jesus. They had promptly resented and forbidden this as an interference with their rights and as an insult to their Master. But Jesus instructs them differently. It was far better for the exorcists to be using His name than to be relying upon incantations of devils. The chances were that this man believed in Jesus as the Messiah, but he had not yet gained the understanding that he ought to join the disciples of Jesus and follow after Him, thus confessing his faith before men. Just the same, he did not hinder, but furthered, so far as he was concerned, the work of Jesus. This judgment of Christ contains an instruction for all of us to have patience with our weak brethren and sisters. They have faith in their hearts and confess the name of Jesus, but are not yet so far advanced as to be on a level with established Christians. But the Lord will give them further enlightenment, and it is not for us to set limits too arbitrarily.

Rejection by the Samaritans: V. 51. **And it came to pass, when the time was come that He should be received up, He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem,** v. 52. **and sent messengers before His face; and they went, and entered into a village of the Samaritans to make ready for Him.** V. 53. **And they did not receive Him because His face was as though He would go to Jerusalem.** V. 54. **And when His disciples James and John saw this, they said, Lord, wilt Thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elias did?** V. 55. **But He turned, and rebuked them, and said, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of.** V. 56. **For the Son of Man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them. And they went to another village.** John and James, the "sons of thunder," had not yet learned the full lesson of humility, as this incident shows.

When the days of His being received up were altogether fulfilled, when the days of His assumption were in course of accomplishment, "implying the approach of the closing scenes of Christ's earthly experience," then He firmly set His face to journey up to Jerusalem. It was not the last journey which the Lord was here undertaking, but one which would settle His fate, so far as the leaders of the Jews were concerned. From this time forth He might expect a falling away of popular favor. He made this journey through Samaria. But when, in one case, He sent messengers ahead to provide lodging, He met with a flat refusal. The Samaritans, a mixed people, had fallen away from the Jewish Church, accepted only the Pentateuch as God's revealed Word, and did not worship at Jerusalem. There was, on that account, little love lost between the Jews and the Samaritans, John 4, 9. In this case the people of the Samaritan village would not give Jesus lodging, because, literally, His face was journeying to Jerusalem; He was headed in that direction, that was His destination. But this treatment of their Master filled John and James with the greatest indignation. Referring to the act of Elijah, 2 Kings 1, 10, they wanted to follow his example and have the village destroyed by fire from heaven. But Jesus turned to them and very earnestly upbraided them for their suggestion. The spirit of Christ and the New Testament is not bent upon destroying the souls of people, but upon saving them. Rather than show any resentment, Jesus chose a different village to lodge in. This lesson is in place even to-day. The Christian Church, the Christian congregation, uses no force in bringing Christ and His Gospel to people, for His kingdom is not of this world. "Here Christ says: Remember of what spirit ye are children, namely, of the Holy Spirit, who is a Spirit of peace, not of division. This Peter also forgot in the garden, when Christ said to him: Put the sword into the sheath. It requires not fighting, but suffering. The Holy Spirit permits it now, and maintains His silence that Christ is thus crucified and abominably dealt with. Thus, because we have the pure doctrine, it happens also to us that everything that is great in the world uses power and might against this doctrine. But God alone upholds it, else it would have been destroyed long ago. . . . But since they vilify the doctrine and defend their godless estate, we cannot hold silence, but must speak against them. But we are here like John and James; our heart has this feeling, that we desire revenge upon the godless tyrants. . . . Here every one should repent thoroughly and pray God that He would keep us from such murderous thoughts. Revenge we should not desire, but have compassion, and remember why the Son of Man is come, namely, that we should not desire judgment and revenge upon the sinners." 59)

59) Luther, 7, 1464. 1465.

True Discipleship of Christ. Luke 9, 57—62.

V. 57. **And it came to pass that, as they went in the way, a certain man said unto Him, Lord, I will follow Thee whithersoever Thou goest.** V. 58. **And Jesus said unto him, Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay His head.** V. 59. **And He said unto another, Follow Me. But he said, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father.** V. 60. **Jesus said unto him, Let the dead bury their dead; but go thou and preach the kingdom of God.** V. 61. **And another also said, Lord, I will follow Thee; but let me first go bid them farewell which are at home at my house.** V. 62. **And Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.** Cp. Matt. 8, 19—22. All three incidents teach the same lesson: True discipleship of Christ implies a denial of self and all earthly ties, in certain circumstances even the obligations of blood-relationship. The first man offered to become Christ's disciple, but did not know that sacrifices were asked. Jesus points to His own case. The foxes have dens, and the birds of the heaven have roosting-places, but the Son of Man has no place which He can call His own. If that is the Master's position, the disciple can hardly expect more. In the second case, Jesus asked a scribe to become His disciple. When this man gave his excuse that he must first go back and bury his father, Jesus tells him that this duty is well taken care of in the hands of those that make it their occupation to bury the dead, but that he should come and follow Jesus by proclaiming on every side the kingdom of God. In the third case, the man offers to follow, but proposes a preliminary condition, namely, that he first be given an opportunity to say farewell to his friends. This is a type of man who always first wants to do something in which he himself is personally interested, and then take care of the main duty. But Jesus calls him to order with a proverbial saying: No one having laid his hand to the plow and then looking behind him is fit for the kingdom of God. To follow Jesus in His ministry is the highest calling, and it requires a firm intention and a steady eye. Any labor is unfruitful unless the whole man takes part in it and devotes his entire mind to the subject in hand. These lessons are so badly needed to-day that every one can make the application for himself. "The first case is that of inconsiderate impulse, the second that of conflicting duties, the third that of a divided mind." 60)

Summary. *Jesus sends out the Twelve on a missionary journey, feeds five thousand, accepts Peter's confession and predicts His Passion, is transfigured, heals a lunatic boy, gives several lessons in humility, and teaches a lesson in discipleship.*

60) *Expositor's Greek Testament*, 1, 537.

CHAPTER 10.

The Mission of the Seventy. Luke 10, 1—22.

The plenteous harvest: V. 1. **After these things the Lord appointed other seventy also, and sent them two and two before His face into every city and place whither He Himself would come.** V. 2. **Therefore said He unto them, The harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few; pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest that He would send forth laborers into His harvest.** The Lord was constantly seeking more disciples, as the last incidents plainly show; His word of invitation went out again and again, pleading with men to follow His merciful leadership. And there were always some that were convinced and gladly joined the ranks of the believers in the Messiah of the world. From among these disciples in the wider sense, most of whom accompanied Jesus on His journeys, He now appointed or commissioned others, seventy in number, in addition to the Twelve whom He had elected as His representatives. The principal difference between the work of the two groups seems to have been that the seventy had only a temporary commission, the work of preparing the way for Him in parts of Palestine, in Judea, where the Lord was comparatively unknown. Jesus sent them two by two, for companionship and mutual assistance. They went before His face, as special heralds, to prepare the people for the appearance of the Christ. He mapped out His itinerary and had them take note of the cities and places where He planned to go. It may not have been the intention of Christ to visit all the small villages and hamlets personally, but He wanted the announcement to go before Him that the great Prophet of Galilee, the Savior of Israel, was drawing near to their country. Knowing this, every one that was concerned about the Messiah could come in person and see and hear Him. And Jesus characterized the situation for the benefit of these messengers. The harvest was great: there were many thousands of people in need of redemption, and many perhaps ready to receive it. Therefore the need of men fit to take part in the great work of preaching the Kingdom was particularly great. This has been true at all times since the days of Jesus, and will continue to be true till the end of time. In the heathen countries there are millions of souls still sitting in darkness and the shadow of death. And in the so-called Christian countries the proportion of professing Christians is very small. In our own country there are thousands of towns and small cities without any preaching of the Gospel. And so the second part of Christ's statement must also find its application, that the earnest prayer of all sincere Christians must go up to the Father of all grace and mercies that He would send forth laborers into His harvest, that He would make many young men willing to heed His call, and that many others take upon themselves the privilege of supplying these workers with the supplies for maintaining life while attending to these duties.

The first instructions: V. 3. **Go your ways; behold, I send you forth as lambs among wolves.** V. 4. **Carry neither purse, nor scrip, nor shoes; and salute no man by the way.** V. 5. **And into whatsoever house ye enter, first say, Peace be to this house.** V. 6. **And if the son of peace be there, your peace shall rest upon it; if not, it shall turn to you again.** V. 7. **And in the same house remain, eating and drinking such things as they give; for the laborer is worthy of his hire. Go not from house to house.** Throughout the instructions the note is sounded: It is the business of the King; and the business of the King requireth haste. In general, these marching orders do not differ from those given to the apostles, for the circumstances were practically the same. The order was to go; but the Lord frankly tells them that their position would resemble that of lambs in the midst of wolves. They should know from the start that their helplessness was absolute, so far as their own strength was concerned. The enemies that would arise to combat them would be so much mightier than they that with might of theirs could naught be done; their one trust should be the Lord and His protection. They were not to carry a purse, since money should not be found on them; they were not to follow the methods of the itinerant prophets and have a beggar's sack on the shoulder; they should not even take sandals with them, the heavy sandals used for journeys. They should not indulge in the circumstantial Oriental salutations, during which, for example, the inferior stood still until the superior had passed by; they should be intent exclusively upon their business. Theirs was to be a house mission, and with the greeting of peace, as the first word spoken, they should enter into every house. If any one were living there that fitted the attribute "son of peace," a person of uprightness and benevolence, a true Israelite, then their peace should and would rest upon such a person; but in the opposite event, the blessing of the peace would return to him that uttered it. In any case the good wish would not be lost. True Christian courtesy is never in vain, for even if the intended recipient chooses to be unpleasant and grouchy, there is always the satisfaction of having shown politeness. A kind word costs nothing, and may bring rich interest. Incidentally, the seventy should not scout around from house to house, looking for the best boarding-place, but should remain in the house where they first entered. And there they should eat and drink the meat and drink which belonged to the people of the house as though it were their own. For, Christ says,

the laborer is worthy of his hire; their food and keep was their hire, it belonged to them of right for work done, 1 Cor. 9, 11—14.

Further instructions: V. 8. **And into whatsoever city ye enter, and they receive you, eat such things as are set before you;** v. 9. **and heal the sick that are therein, and say unto them, The kingdom of God is come nigh unto you.** V. 10. **But into whatsoever city ye enter, and they receive you not, go your ways out into the streets of the same and say,** v. 11. **Even the very dust of your city which cleaveth on us we do wipe off against you; notwithstanding be ye sure of this, that the kingdom of God is come nigh unto you.** V. 12. **But I say unto you that it shall be more tolerable in that day for Sodom than for that city.** What was said of individual houses is now repeated with respect to entire cities. Wherever the reception was kind and in accordance with the dignity of their calling, there they should remain, eating the things that were set before them. They should be content with the fare which the people could afford, even if that happened to be frugal. A pastor will always be glad to share the poverty of his parishioners, just as the parishioners should always be glad to share their wealth with their pastor. The work of the seventy is then briefly indicated, to heal the sick and to announce the coming of the kingdom of God in the person of Jesus. For every one that accepts Christ by faith enters into this Kingdom. This would be the privilege of the people that heard the message, since the invitation was thereby extended to them all. But if the disciples should be refused admission into some city or its houses, they should endeavor to bring home to the inhabitants of such a city the heinousness of their offense, since in rejecting the heralds they despised the Master. Going out of the inhospitable houses into the streets, they should deliberately wipe off the very dust that had been taken up by their feet since entering the town. It was the most expressive gesture of absolute rejection. And yet, so far as the rest is concerned, the people of that city should know that the kingdom of God was just upon them, that they were offered an opportunity of accepting it, and that it was their own fault if it had come to them in vain. Solemnly Jesus declares that the fault of such a city in despising the Gospel would be of a nature to outrank the transgressions of Sodom, and would be thus treated on the Day of Judgment.

Woes upon several cities of Galilee: V. 13. **Woe unto thee, Chorazin! Woe unto thee, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works had been done in Tyre and Sidon which have been done in you, they had a great while ago repented, sitting in sackcloth and ashes.** V. 14. **But it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the Judgment than for you.** V. 15. **And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted to heaven, shalt be thrust down to hell.** V. 16. **He that heareth you heareth Me; and he that despiseth you despiseth Me; and he that despiseth Me despiseth Him that sent Me.** Cp. Matt. 11, 21—23. The question of the guilt of those that reject the Gospel calls to the mind of Jesus the behavior of the cities of Galilee in whose neighborhood some of His greatest works had been done. He had come to them with the fulness of His love and mercy, and they had rejected Him. Chorazin and Bethsaida were on the shores of Lake Gennesaret, almost side by side. Great miracles had been done in their midst, and the people had been willing enough to be entertained, but the words of eternal love out of the mouth of Jesus had made no impression upon them. Under like circumstances Tyre and Sidon, the heathen cities whom the Jews despised for their idolatrous practises and beliefs, would long since have repented, clothed in a garment of sack-cloth, with ashes on the head. And therefore Tyre and Sidon, to whom His grace had not been revealed in this measure, would receive greater consideration on the Day of Judgment than these cities of Galilee. And Capernaum also, which had been lifted up to heaven by the fact that Jesus made this city His headquarters during His Galilean ministry, would receive the full measure of His wrath on the last day and be forcefully thrust down to hell. Note: There is a word of warning here for all Christians. They have Christ in their midst for years, decades, and generations, in the printed and in the spoken Word of the Gospel. But how often is Jesus neglected and overlooked in the Christian homes! No reading of Scriptures alone or in family worship; no regular attendance at church; — there is danger of falling into the condemnation of the Galilean cities. And this applies also to the treatment accorded to the messengers of Christ. In hearing them we hear Christ, for they are His ambassadors and plenipotentiaries; but also, in despising them, in repudiating the Gospel of mercy, we repudiate Christ, of whose salvation it preaches; and in despising Christ, we despise His heavenly Father, partly because He is sent forth by the Father with full power, partly because He is one with the Father. Here is food for serious thought!

The return and report of the seventy: V. 17. **And the seventy returned again with joy, saying, Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through Thy name.** V. 18. **And He said unto them, I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven.** V. 19. **Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy; and nothing shall by any means hurt you.** V. 20. **Notwithstanding in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you, but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven.** The mission of the seventy was attended with great success,

as Luke here reports at once, and they returned with joy. They were especially elated over the fact that they had been able to accomplish more than they had expected or been promised. Confronted with the necessity, they had adjured demons in the name of Jesus, and through the power of this mighty name and by faith in His almighty strength they had driven them out. Not all exigencies of pastoral work can be mapped out, even in a very complete course, and therefore a pastor must, under circumstances, beg for power from on high and then use his best judgment in solving a difficulty. The report of the disciples was no news to Jesus. In His omniscience He had seen the very Satan, Satan himself, falling from heaven like lightning. As a bolt of lightning comes down from heaven in shining glory and disappears on earth, so the splendid power of Satan was thrust down out of heaven. As spirits the devil and his angels belong to the creatures above the earth, and therefore their destruction, their conquest, appears as a fall from heaven. In the casting out of the evil spirits the destruction of the power of Satan appeared. Christ Himself, as the stronger, had come upon the strong, had overcome and bound him. The entire life of Christ, from His birth to His burial, was a victory over Satan. And this victory is transmitted to the disciples of Jesus. He gave them the power to step upon, to tread under foot, vipers and scorpions and the entire power of the enemy, and nothing should in any wise hurt them. All the dangerous, demoniac powers that attempt to harm the disciples of Jesus in their work of preaching the Gospel must be subject to them. The work of the Lord must progress and be brought to the desired conclusion, and if all the devils of hell make a league to overcome it. But this is not the most important fact for the individual Christian, and this is not his greatest cause for rejoicing, that the devils are subject to him through the name of Christ, but the happiness of the Christians rests upon, is founded upon that fact that their names are inscribed in the heavens. That is the glorious certainty of the believers, that they know God has chosen them from the beginning unto salvation, has prepared the everlasting mansions for them. This fact must remain uppermost in a Christian's consciousness. It will keep him from putting his trust in his own gifts and works.

The exultation of Jesus: V. 21. **In that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit and said, I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father; for so it seemed good in Thy sight.** V. 22. **All things are delivered to Me of My Father; and no man knoweth who the Son is but the Father; and who the Father is but the Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal Him.** There is a note of triumph in these words of Jesus, that the salvation of men is going on in spite of all efforts of the enemy to frustrate it. He exulted in the Holy Spirit, the Spirit in Him uttered an inspired saying. He gives the fulness of praise to the Father, the almighty Lord of heaven and earth. The final purpose of the entire work of redemption was to redound to the glory of God, according to whose counsel it was carried out. To those that are wise and prudent in their own conceit, that hope to find the way to a heaven of their own imagination by works of their own imagination and by wisdom of their own, to these the way of salvation is hidden, 1 Cor. 1, 18—25. But to the unlearned, to those that are willing to take all reason captive under the obedience of Christ and, as new-born babes, desire the sincere milk of the Word, to these God reveals the wonders of His Word and works. That has been God's good pleasure, and for that we owe Him everlasting thankfulness.

The Good Samaritan. Luke 10, 23—37.

The blessedness of Christ's disciples: V. 23. **And He turned Him unto His disciples, and said privately, Blessed are the eyes which see the things that ye see.** V. 24. **For I tell you that many prophets and kings have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them.** The disciples were not conscious of their great privilege, nor did they value it as highly as they should have. Jesus, therefore, addresses Himself to them alone and impresses upon them the glories of their station and of their calling as disciples and believers. Happy were their eyes since they were privileged to see Jesus, the Savior of the world, in the flesh. Many prophets and kings of the Old Testament had looked forward to the appearance of the Messiah with great longing, Gen. 49, 18; 2 Sam. 7, 12. There had been many a Simeon and many an Anna that were longing to see the Savior with their own eyes. All this had fallen to the lot of the disciples without their seeking. They saw the eternal Word who was made flesh; they saw His glory, the glory as of the Only-Begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth; they heard from His own mouth the Word of eternal life. We Christians of the New Testament do not share the disadvantages of the believers of old. For though we are not able to see Jesus in the flesh, we have Him with us always, until the end of the world, Matt. 28, 20. And He is with us in His Word, in and through which we have communion with the Son and with the Father. "As though He would say: Now is a blessed time, a pleasant year, a time of mercy; the thing which now is present is so precious that the eyes which see it are fittingly called blessed. For till now the Gospel had not been preached so openly and clearly before everybody; the Holy Ghost had not been given openly, but was

still hidden, and had little success. But Christ began the work of the Holy Ghost, and the apostles afterward carried it on with all earnestness; therefore He here in general calls those blessed that see and hear such grace." 61)

The question of the lawyer: V. 25. **And, behold, a certain lawyer stood up and tempted Him, saying, Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?** V. 26. **He said unto him, What is written in the Law? How readest thou?** V. 27. **And he, answering, said, Thou shalt love the Lord, thy God, with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbor as thyself.** V. 28. **And He said unto him, Thou hast answered right; this do, and thou shalt live.** A lawyer, a man versed in the Law and the traditions of the Jews, one of those that belonged to the wise and prudent of the world, stood up before or against Jesus, as His opponent. His purpose was deliberately to tempt Jesus, to lead Him astray. He tried this with the question: Master, what shall, what must I do to inherit eternal life? His question is strangely put, for it can hardly be said that the heirs *do* anything to get the inheritance. He would have expressed his meaning more truthfully if he had said: What must I do to earn eternal life? Jesus, according to a disconcerting habit He had, answered with a counter-question. He did not give the results of any philosophy, but referred the questioner to the written Scripture. The first question with its general trend is supplemented by the second, which searches the mind of the man before Him. Note: Philosophy of the Christian religion is a dangerous term, and stands for a dangerous science. The Lord does not want us to philosophize and to think out our own religious scheme, but to follow the Word. The man was indeed well versed in the Old Testament, for he gave the summary of the Moral Law correctly, according to Deut. 6, 5; Lev. 19, 18. To love God the Lord with all the heart and with all the soul and with all the strength and with all the mind and understanding, that is the summary of the first table. And to love one's neighbor as one's self is the summary of the second table. "To love God with all the heart, to love God above all creatures, that is: although many creatures are pleasant that they please me and I love them, that I yet, for the sake of God, when God, my Lord, wants it, despise and give them all up. To love God with all the soul is that thy whole life be directed toward Him and thou mayest say, if the love of creatures or any persecution wants to overwhelm thee: All this I gladly give up rather than leave my God; they may throw me out, they may strangle me or drown me, let anything happen to me that God wills, all this I will gladly endure rather than leave Thee. Lord, to Thee I will cling more firmly than to all creatures, also to all that does not belong to Thee; all that I am and have I will give up, but Thee I shall not leave. . . . To love God with all the strength is to bring all members into action, so that one will risk all that he can with his physical body rather than do what is opposed to God. To love God with all the mind is to accept nothing which does not please God; by this he means the self-conceit which a person has; but rather that the mind be centered in God and upon all things that please God." 62) Jesus commended the answer of the lawyer as being correct. But He added a weighty word: This do, and thou shalt live. Here lay the real difficulty, for knowing and doing are two very different things. If that were possible, indeed, to keep the Law of God perfectly, then the person that could perform this wonderful feat would thereby earn eternal life. A perfect fulfilment of the Law has, as its reward of merit, the blessedness of heaven. But there is the rub. By the deeds of the Law is no man justified before God, because there is no man on earth that doeth good and sinneth not. "That is preaching the Law properly and giving a good, strong lesson, yea, catching him in his own words and in the right place, where He can show him what he still lacks." 63)

Jesus teaches who our neighbor is: V. 29. **But he, willing to justify himself, said unto Jesus, And who is my neighbor?** V. 30. **And Jesus, answering, said, A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead.** V. 31. **And by chance there came down a certain priest that way; and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side.** V. 32. **And likewise a Levite, when he was at the place, came and looked on him, and passed by on the other side.** The lawyer was somewhat taken aback at the answer of Jesus, and especially by the pointed: This do! It was his boast that he had always kept the commandments of the Lord, and the implication of Christ that there was still something for him to do rather caused some resentment. His desire was to justify himself, the old story of the aim of every human being since the time of Adam. "Those are the truly evil people that are proud of their external appearance, that want to justify themselves and make themselves pious with their works, as this lawyer here does. . . . Thus all hypocrites do that outwardly march along beautifully with admirable, great, high works. They may say that they do not covet glory and praise, but inwardly in their heart they are full of false ambition, they desire that all the world should know their piety, are greatly pleased if they hear any one

61) Luther, 11, 1537.

62) Luther, 11, 1541. 1542

63) Luther, 11, 1559.

speak of it." 64) The resentment of the lawyer crops out in his question: And who, then, may my neighbor be? His argument is that one cannot always know who one's neighbor is; it surely cannot be expected that we help all men in all their misfortunes. The Jews drew the boundaries very sharply, including only those of their own nation in the law of love, and excluding all others. "And above all is here rebuked and rejected the hypocritical explanation of the Jews, who picture and locate their neighbor according to their own ideas and consider only those whom they want in this class, that is, one who is a friend and merits it, who is worthy of the benefit and love, of whom they have made use and hope to make use of still more, believing that they were not under obligation to serve nor to help strange, unknown, unworthy, ungrateful enemies." 65)

But the story which Jesus tells, teaches, in a most searching and impressive manner whom God regards as our neighbor. A certain man went down from the hill country, where Jerusalem is situated, down through the rocky, badland section of Judea to the city of Jericho, in the low valley of the Jordan, the lowest river in the world. This region is an ideal country for robbers, since both the places for ambush and for hiding are so numerous. It was a certain man; no nationality given; a human being. And he fell into the hands of robbers which infested this region. They stripped him, belabored him with stripes, and then went their way, leaving their victim in a half-dead condition. Here was a man, a human being, in direst need of help. Now it so happened that a certain priest traveled down the same road. He saw the man lying there in his blood, but he went by, intent upon saving his own life and getting out of the dangerous region as fast as possible. In the same way a Levite, coming to that place, stepped near and saw the unfortunate man, but also hurried by over on the farther side, intent only upon saving himself. Both of these men belonged to the leaders among the people, to such as were supposed to be teaching and practising the arts of mercy and kindness toward all men. Yet they neglect an obvious duty in the desire to save themselves a disagreeable experience, in the fear that they might have to share his misfortune. This same spirit is abroad in the land to-day. The sayings: Every one is nearest neighbor to himself; Charity begins at home, and others are abused with an obvious purpose, namely, to find an excuse for neglected opportunities for aiding one's neighbor.

The story concluded: V. 33. **But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was; and when he saw him, he had compassion on him,** v. 34. **and went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. V. 35. And on the morrow, when he departed, he took out two pence, and gave them to the host, and said unto him, Take care of him; and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee. V. 36. Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbor unto him that fell among the thieves? V. 37. And he said, He that showed mercy on him. Then said Jesus unto him, Go, and do thou likewise.** The first two travelers had been Jews, and men of influence in the Jewish nation at that. This man that came last was a Samaritan, of whom the average Jew, as, for instance, this lawyer, believed anything but good. But this Samaritan, who had set out on a long journey, and was presumably in a hurry to cover as much ground as possible, yet when he came to the victim of the hold-up and saw his condition, was filled with the deepest compassion. But he wasted no time, neither in anxious solicitude for his own welfare nor in idle lamenting over the man's misfortune. He acted. He went to the man, washed out his wounds with wine, on account of its antiseptic, cleansing properties, and also with oil, on account of its soothing, cooling qualities. He bound up the wounds to prevent further loss of blood; he placed him upon his own beast of burden, his pack-mule; he took him to an inn by the wayside, where a host could take care of his wants; he took the best care of the feverish man during the night. And when, on the next day, he was obliged to continue his journey, he paid the host in advance for the keep of two more days, two denarii (about 34 or 35 cents). Thus he gave the poor sick man into the charge of the innkeeper, with the promise to pay any additional expense when he came by here again. It is implied that he expects to return to this inn on his return; he is known as a regular customer. After this detailed, vivid picture there was hardly need of the question of Jesus as to who of the three travelers had proved himself a true neighbor to him that fell into the hands of the brigands. But the lawyer answered willingly and correctly enough: He that showed mercy toward him. And the word of Jesus made the application of the whole story: Go, and thou do likewise. The lesson was clear. There is no need of spending much time in looking for neighbors. Every one whom the Lord places near us, brings us into contact with, and who is in actual need, is one toward whom we can and ought to show mercy. For the chance of which we are apt to speak is God's way of bringing suffering to our attention. If we should harden our hearts in such a case and refuse to do what is so obviously our duty under the circumstances, we deny our neighbor the help which the Lord demands of us and thus become murderers in the sight of God. Not that we are commanded to

64) Luther, 11, 1539.
65) Luther, 11, 1565.

encourage idleness and loafing. But we have homes, institutions, in which poor, sick, orphans, and other unfortunate people are taken care of. Not all of us can go and tend to the service of these people. On account of the labors of our calling we would have neither the time nor the ability to do so. But we engage people that have the proper training for the work, and then see to it that the charity account of such institution does not suffer with a chronic shortage. That is the service of mercy, a blessed service.

Mary and Martha. Luke 10, 38—42.

V. 38. Now it came to pass, as they went, that He entered into a certain village; and a certain woman named Martha received Him into her house. V. 39. And she had a sister called Mary, which also sat at Jesus' feet and heard His word. V. 40. But Martha was cumbered about much serving, and came to Him and said, Lord, dost Thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? Bid her therefore that she help me. V. 41. And Jesus answered and said unto her, Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things; v. 42. but one thing is needful; and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her. It is interesting to see that Luke here again brings a story of women that were disciples of Jesus. As they went, in the continuation of their journey, they came to a certain village. In the opinion of many commentators, Mary, Martha, and Lazarus at that time lived in a village on the Samaritan border, moving to Bethany later; but this is immaterial. However, we are struck by the evident intimacy of Jesus with the members of this household. This serves as an excellent example for all Christian households. Jesus should be the Friend, the ever-welcome Guest in every Christian home. In the prayers before and after meals, in family worship, in the prayers at bedtime His gracious presence should be invited, and the affairs of the entire household should always be conducted in such a manner that the Lord will be glad to make His home in the midst of such a family circle. Martha seems to have been the elder of the sisters, since we find her directing the affairs of the home and assuming the part of the hostess. But her sister Mary found a better use for her time than busying herself with household affairs. Just as Jesus always taught the matters concerning the kingdom of God with great willingness, so Mary absorbed His teaching with extreme avidity. So absorbed was she in the words of eternal truth that came forth from the mouth of Jesus that she forgot all else. Martha, on the other hand, after the manner of housewives the world over, was overbusy to serve the distinguished and beloved Guest properly; she tried to discover new ways of serving the Lord in her work as hostess. Note: We have here two forms of service, each done to the Lord, each with the best of intentions, the one with the work of the hands, the other in listening to the words of eternal wisdom. They need not clash, but have their worth, if the relation of values is always regarded, and first things are placed first. This lesson Martha had not yet learned. It displeased her that she was obliged to do the work of preparing the meals and serving the Lord all alone. And so she finally stepped up and said: Lord, does it not bother Thee that my sister lets me serve alone? Tell her that she should take a hand in this service also. There is a certain amount of resentment even against Jesus noticeable in these words, as though she would indicate that the Lord might stop teaching for a while and not interfere with the household duties. Jesus, however, tells the harassed hostess patiently and kindly, but also firmly, that she was bothering and concerning herself about many things. "Here you see that Christ, although He is hungry, yet He is so anxious about the salvation of souls that He forgets the food and only preaches to Mary; and He is so careful and concerned about the Word that He even rebukes Martha, who on account of her work, about which she is worried, even neglected the Gospel. . . . And especially should we give up all worry when the Word comes; then all work and occupation should be neglected." 66) There is only one thing that is needful in this world, which must be placed ahead of all other things, that is the Word of the Gospel, and faith in such Word and salvation. This good portion Mary had chosen. She had found in the Word the peace which passes all understanding; she was being trained unto eternal life. And that good part shall be taken neither from Mary nor from any other believer. The things of this world pass away, but the Word of the Lord abideth forever.

Summary. *Jesus commissions seventy disciples as His messengers, utters a woe upon three Galilean cities, praises the blessedness of His disciples, tells the story of the Good Samaritan, and is a guest in the house of Martha, whom He instructs concerning the one thing needful.*

66) Luther, 13b, 2354.

CHAPTER 11.

A Lesson in Prayer. Luke 11, 1—13.

The Lord's Prayer: V. 1. **And it came to pass that, as He was praying in a certain place, when He ceased, one of His disciples said unto Him, Lord, teach us to pray as John also taught his disciples.** V. 2. **And He said unto them, When ye pray, say, Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come.** V. 3. **Give us day by day our daily bread.** V. 4. **And forgive us our sins; for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil.** The habit of Jesus of resorting to prayer as often as possible, but especially at times of great stress and menacing trouble, was well known to the disciples; but one of them at least had occasion also to be convinced of the power and fervency of His prayer. When Jesus, therefore, upon that occasion, had ceased praying, this disciple, one of the later ones, that had not heard the Sermon on the Mount, stated a request to the Master that He teach them to pray, just as John the Baptist had given his disciples such lessons. The questioner had probably been one of John's disciples, but had now finally been persuaded to follow Jesus. The Lord gladly yields to the wish and repeats, in a somewhat briefer form, what He had taught before. Cp. Matt. 6, 9—13. As Father we address God: He is the Father of all created beings; they are His by virtue of His creation and His providence; but Father of the believers in a special sense, through the redemption and merits of Jesus Christ, Gal. 3, 26; 4, 6; 1 John 3, 1. 2. His name, His Word, everything that in any way designates and describes His essence, shall be hallowed, not by being made holy, but by being kept untarnished, unblemished, before the world. The believers pray earnestly for power so to live from day to day, so to comport themselves, that the name of God may be praised and honored throughout the world and not in any way dishonored or blasphemed, Rom. 2, 24. His kingdom should come — to us, by the fact of His keeping us in His Word and faith at all times; to all other people on earth, through the preaching of the glorious news of salvation in all the world. His will should be done. With the same willingness and eagerness as the angels in heaven delight in doing God's will, so glad should we be found to carry out all His precepts. At the same time we pray for patient submission, if the will of the heavenly Father should find it necessary to lay a cross upon us. He will carry out His good and gracious will against all the attempts of the enemies to frustrate the designs of mercy toward us. The bread of and for the day we ask of the Lord, enough to last us till the next morning, that we may not be concerned and worry about the things of this body and life. For the forgiveness of our sins, the greatest spiritual gift, we pray, promising incidentally to forgive every one that offends us, since the small debts of our fellow-men cannot even come into consideration in comparison with the immense debt of our trespasses against God. We pray that He would not lead us into temptation, not permit our enemies to place traps for our unwary feet, to guard and keep us, that the devil, the world, and our own flesh may not deceive us, nor seduce us into misbelief, despair, and other great shame and vice, as Luther explains. Rather do we ask of Him and hope to receive this by faith, that God would deliver us from the devil and every evil which that evil spirit and most dangerous enemy may devise against us. The disciples of Christ of all times, who ought to be instant and expert in prayer, are still very sluggish, weak, and forgetful in spiritual things; they must always learn over again what they have once learned, they must be taught day by day what and how they should pray.

The importunity of prayer: V. 5. **And He said unto them, Which of you shall have a friend, and shall go unto him at midnight, and say unto him, Friend, lend me three loaves,** v. 6. **for a friend of mine in his journey is come to me, and I have nothing to set before him;** v. 7. **and he from within shall answer and say, Trouble me not; the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give thee?** V. 8. **I say unto you, Though he will not rise and give him because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity he will rise and give him as many as he needeth.** V. 9. **And I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.** V. 10. **For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.** An effective admonition to be instant and persistent in prayer. Note the vividness, but also the chasteness of the narrative: The friend, presuming upon the rights of friendship; the midnight call; the urgent pleading for three loaves of bread to set a meal before an unexpected guest; the displeasure of the other at the disturbance and his unwillingness to disturb the children that shared the same room with him; his pleading inconvenience and grumbling over the matter, protesting that he cannot fulfil his request. All this is true to life. But just as true to average experience is the final yielding of the housefather, not so much on account of the demands of friendship as for the purpose of quieting the importunate disturber. The picture is strongly drawn, and purposely so, on account of the lesson the Lord

wishes to convey. The importunity of the Christian's prayer must verge on impudence; it must be characterized by an unwearied perseverance, by an endurance which refuses to be discouraged, by a shameless disregard of God's apparent indifference. There is a climax in Christ's admonition. The asking must be followed by an earnest seeking, and this eager searching by persistent knocking at the door of God's heart. The result must finally be that the pleader will see his petition fulfilled; the searcher will find his quest rewarded; he whose knocking reverberates through the house again and again will find the doors opened unto him. This is the holy importunity of prayer which Jesus here recommends to us, enjoins upon us; for it is a praying, an urging, a storming which comes out of faith and therefore cannot fail of its object. "If even a man that loves his night's rest more than his friend can be moved to yield, since he cannot sleep on account of the importunate pleading: how much more the best Friend in heaven, who is all love toward His friends on earth?" 67)

A further admonition: V. 11. **If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? Or if he ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent?** V. 12. **Or if he shall ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion?** V. 13. **If ye, then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him!** Jesus draws a final lesson from the love which parents bear to their children. Whom of you, being a father, shall his son ask for bread, — surely he will not give him a stone! Or also a fish, — surely he will not give him, instead of the fish, a serpent! Or also an egg, — surely he will not give a scorpion (the latter being a lobsterlike animal lurking in stone walls). A parent that would act as Jesus describes would be inhuman. No normal, sane father would be capable of such cruelty. And now Jesus makes the conclusion from the smaller to the greater. If human parents, whose disposition of heart is by nature evil, will show so much affection toward their children, surely the Father from heaven, in His merciful goodness and grace, will give the Holy Ghost, the highest and most wonderful gift from above, the gift which includes all other spiritual gifts, to them that ask Him! God wants the Christians to pray, and He intends to give them the spiritual gifts which they have need of without condition. But He insists upon being asked, lest the gifts lose their value in the eyes of men, and lest the Christians become careless about working out their own salvation with fear and trembling. He does not force His gifts upon unwilling and indifferent hearts.

67) Luther, quoted in Stoeckhardt, *Biblische Geschichte des Neuen Testaments*, 184.

Christ Casts Out a Devil and Rebukes the Pharisees. Luke 11, 14—28.

The miracle and its effect: V. 14. **And He was casting out a devil, and it was dumb. And it came to pass, when the devil was gone out, the dumb spake; and the people wondered.** V. 15. **But some of them said, He casteth out devils through Beelzebub, the chief of the devils.** V. 16. **And others, tempting Him, sought of Him a sign from heaven.** Luke makes the historical setting of this story very meager, stating merely the fact that Jesus cast out a demon that was dumb, but omitting to mention the Pharisees and scribes, since his readers would not have known what these persons represented in this connection. The evangelist's purpose is to bring out the words of Jesus upon this occasion. Three classes of people are mentioned as being influenced by the miracle of casting out the demon. The great majority of the common people wondered; that was their usual status after some extraordinary proof of Christ's power. Had they but searched the Scriptures and believed what Jesus said of Himself, their astonishment might have had some value. Their direct descendants are the modern persons that want to bear the Christian name, that marvel at the beauty and power of the Gospel, but are not interested in its deeper meaning, in the salvation of their souls. The second class was much smaller. It was recruited from the ranks of the Pharisees, and their feeling toward Christ was that of implacable, malignant hatred. Sneeringly they remarked that in and through the power of Beelzebub (the god of flies) or Beelzebul (the god of dung), the prince and foremost of the demons, He cast out the demons. That was infamous, base slander, against their own knowledge and conviction. And the third class, agreeing with the second in their hatred of Jesus, tempted Him, tried to draw Him on, sought a sign from heaven from Him, as though the many signs and wonders which had been done before the people were not sufficient evidence of the Lord's divine mission. To this day the enemies of the Lord resort to lies and slanders to harm the work of the Gospel; their object is to suppress the truth at all costs.

Christ's defense: V. 17. **But He, knowing their thoughts, said unto them, Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and a house divided against a house falleth.** V. 18. **If Satan also be divided against himself, how shall his kingdom stand? Because ye say that I cast out devils through Beelzebub.** V. 19. **But if I by Beelzebub cast out devils, by whom do your sons cast them out? Therefore shall they be your judges.** V. 20. **But if I with the finger of God cast out devils, no doubt the kingdom of God is come upon you.** V. 21. **When a strong man armed keepeth his palace, his goods are in peace;**

v. 22. but when a stronger than he shall come upon him and overcome him, he taketh from him all his armor wherein he trusted, and divideth his spoils. V. 23. He that is not with Me is against Me; and he that gathereth not with Me scattereth. Cp. Matt. 12, 25—30; Mark 3, 23—27. Jesus, by His divine omniscience, knew the thoughts of His enemies, even though He did not hear them, and proceeds to give them a line of argument that leaves them and their slanderous blasphemy in well-deserved disgrace. Every kingdom that is divided against itself is destroyed: the natural result of revolution is dissolution. And, under those circumstances, one house will fall against the next, one tumbling house knocking down its neighbor, and so everything be drawn into the general desolation. This fact being universally acknowledged as in harmony with the experience of mankind, the application to the present situation is easily made. If Jesus be in league with the prince of the devils, and yet cast out devils to their own harm and disgrace, then it follows that there is a division in the kingdom of the devil, and how will his kingdom then stand? Then there is another argument. If that accusation were true and the power of Jesus over the demons were derived from Satan, how were they going to explain the fact that their own sons, their disciples, were acting as exorcists, going about through the country and attempting to cast out devils? Cp. Acts 19, 13. 14. By insisting upon their explanation of Christ's ability, they were condemning themselves, their own disciples becoming their judges. But, on the other hand, if the miracles of casting out devils which Jesus performed were due to the finger of God, the power of God which was necessary in true exorcising,[68] it was an incontrovertible proof that in and with Christ, the Prophet of Nazareth, the kingdom of God had reached them, come upon them. In His person and in His message they had the means of obtaining everlasting life if they would but accept the grace of God. In a kindly, but comprehensive way Jesus now tries to show His audience what His coming into the world signified and included, so far as the rule of Satan was concerned. The latter, indeed, was a strong and mighty spirit, and was at all times fully armed, guarding his court, his palace, his castle, with all his power. For he is the prince of this world and has his work in the children of unbelief. And up till now he had held his own in peace, without any trouble to speak of; all his subjects had been willing and obedient. But now the Stronger one had come, in the person of Jesus of Nazareth, the promised Messiah. He came upon the devil and vanquished him. And not only that, but He reduced him to utter subjection and helplessness by taking from him his panoply, his armor, his practically unlimited power in which he placed his trust, and dividing the spoils among His own followers, Col. 2, 15. But these spoils, victory over death and the devil, belong only to such as have chosen this Champion as their own Lord; for those that are not with Christ, on His side, taking His part at all times, are against Him and must be reckoned with His enemies; and he that is not working with Him in every respect must be considered as belonging to those that disperse and scatter the fruit of His ministry and labor.

An impressive warning: V. 24. **When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest; and finding none, he saith, I will return unto my house whence I came out. V. 25. And when he cometh, he findeth it swept and garnished. V. 26. Then goeth he and taketh to him seven other spirits more wicked than himself; and they enter in and dwell there; and the last state of that man is worse than the first.** We have here an exact and fitting description of the average "saw-dust trail" and "New Year's reformation" and its results, where resolutions are made under the influence of a temporary fear or an attack of civic righteousness, without the power of God in the Gospel. It was even thus with many of the Pharisees, with their outward righteousness and their inward filthiness. By a proud resolution they banished forever, as they thought, some special vice which had ruled them, intemperance, uncleanness, blasphemy. And the banished spirit found no congenial company, finally deciding, therefore, to return to his former home. Cp. Matt. 12, 43—45. In the mean time the proud maker of resolutions has long ago regretted the hasty words, and when the spirit of his favorite vice returns, the house of that person's heart is fully swept and ornamented for his reception. In great glee will such a spirit then go out and hunt companions, more wicked than himself, for now there is little danger of a second banishment. And thus it happens that the last state of that person is worse than the first. It is only by understanding the nature of sin and transgression as an offense against God that repentance can be worked; and it is only through the power of God in the Gospel that a change of heart can truly occur and remain permanent.

A woman's judgment of Christ: V. 27. **And it came to pass, as He spake these things, a certain woman of the company lifted up her voice and said unto Him, Blessed is the womb that bare Thee, and the paps which Thou hast sucked. V. 28. But He said, Yea, rather, blessed are they that hear the Word of God and keep it.** The words of Christ may not have had much influence upon the hard-hearted Pharisees, but they certainly did make a deep impression upon a certain woman in the crowd. Raising her voice, she called out, calling the mother that had borne and nourished such a Son happy and blessed.

68) Cp. Deissmann, *Licht vom Osten*, 222.

She thought and spoke like a mother, and one that would have counted herself lucky in having such a Son. But Jesus corrected her. True happiness, true blessedness, has a different basis, a different reason. Rather let this be known and acted upon, that they that hear the Word of God and keep it are the truly blessed. Hearing alone is not sufficient, as He has shown in the Parable of the Fourfold Soil, but to this must be added the observing and keeping of the Word and the bringing forth of fruit in accordance with their profession. "Therefore let us thank God for such grace that to aid us He sent His Son against the devil to cast him out, and left His Word with us, through which to this day such work is carried on, the kingdom of the devil destroyed, and the kingdom of God is established and increased." 69)

A Warning to the Jews. Luke 11, 29—36.

V. 29. **And when the people were gathered thick together, He began to say, This is an evil generation; they seek a sign, and there shall no sign be given it but the sign of Jonas the Prophet.** V. 30. **For as Jonas was a sign unto the Ninevites, so shall also the Son of Man be to this generation.** V. 31. **The queen of the South shall rise up in the Judgment with the men of this generation and condemn them; for she came from the utmost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and, behold, a greater than Solomon is here.** V. 32. **The men of Nineveh shall rise up in the Judgment with this generation and shall condemn it; for they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and, behold, a greater than Jonas is here.** The altercation with the Pharisees and scribes after the healing of the dumb demoniac had drawn a large crowd, and, as always under such circumstances, the crowd was quickly augmented and enlarged. And so Jesus took the opportunity of speaking to them all, taking His cue from the request that some of them wanted to see a sign from heaven. The entire generation, the whole race of the people that were here represented, were evil, wicked, far from knowing wherein true morality consists. They sought a sign, but they should not receive any in the sense which they had in mind. Only the sign of the Prophet Jonah would be set before them, just as the sign of the brazen serpent was placed before the children of Israel in the wilderness. The resurrection of Jesus is the one great sign from heaven before the people of all times. Cp. Matt. 12, 38—42. Altogether, in his whole ministry, Jonah had been a sign to the inhabitants of Nineveh, as a preacher of righteousness unto salvation. And so Jesus was a sign to the people of His generation and times, proclaiming before them all the coming of the kingdom of God through faith in His ministry and work. But the results would not even measure up to those of Jonah, a fact which would redound to their own condemnation. For in the Judgment, on the day when God will judge the quick and the dead, the queen of the South, the rich and powerful queen that had come to visit Solomon, would appear with them, as their accuser, before the throne of the Judge. For she, for the sake of hearing the wisdom of a mere man, came from the extreme ends of the earth, 1 Kings 10, 1; but here, in the person of Jesus, stood one that was far greater than the ancient king, whose wisdom was immeasurably greater than that of Solomon. Instead of having people come to Him for the words of eternal life, He was obliged to go out and seek the people. And the queen of Sheba would be joined by the men of Nineveh, who would also arise to condemn this generation on the Day of Judgment; for when Jonah preached his sermon of repentance to them, they gave heed and turned from the error of their ways. And here, in the person of Jesus, was a greater man than Jonah, Jonah's God and Lord, in fact.

Parabolic warnings: V. 33. **No man, when he hath lighted a candle, putteth it in a secret place, neither under a bushel, but on a candlestick, that they which come in may see the light.** V. 34. **The light of the body is the eye; therefore, when thine eye is single, thy whole body also is full of light; but when thine eye is evil, thy body also is full of darkness.** V. 35. **Take heed therefore that the light which is in thee be not darkness.** V. 36. **If thy whole body therefore be full of light, having no part dark, the whole shall be full of light, as when the bright shining of a candle doth give thee light.** These proverbial, parabolic sayings of the Lord were favorite remarks of His when He wanted to drive home the great truth of the necessity of harmony between profession and practise of Christian morality. To light a lamp or a light of any kind, and then to place it into a cellar or vault or under a measure, where it cannot be seen and cannot serve as a guide for him that comes into the house, is foolish; for the purpose of the light is not realized. But equally foolish it is for a person professing faith to give no evidence of that faith in outward visible deeds. If there were any present on that day that had gained the conviction of His Messiahship, they should come out boldly for Him and stand up before the whole world. What disastrous results follow the method of being convinced in the heart and yet not daring to confess Christ openly, He shows by a comparison. If the eye of the body, which is its light, is single, healthy, properly fitted for its work, then it serves as the instrument for conveying light to the whole body; but if the eye is evil, unhealthy, not in proper condition, it cannot serve its purpose; and the person possessing such an eye is in darkness though he stand in a flood of sunlight. If,

69) Luther, 13a, 277.

then, the light in any person be darkness, if what he considered to be light be the opposite, then the double darkness of such a person will be appalling. But if the whole body be in bright light and no part in darkness, then the brightness will be like that of lightning. The eye of a Christian is his Christian understanding; it enables the believer to walk in the light of God's Word, makes him ready for every good work. When the light of Christ dwells fully in the heart, it extends its influence to every thought, word, and action, and directs its possessor how he is to comport himself in all places and circumstances. "It is of the utmost importance to have the soul properly influenced by the wisdom that comes down from above. The doctrine that is contrary to the Gospel may say, Ignorance is the mother of devotion; but Christ shows that there can be no devotion without heavenly light. Ignorance is the mother of superstition; but with this the heavenly light has nothing to do." 70)

Woes upon the Pharisees and Lawyers.

Luke 11, 37—54.

The Pharisee's offense: V. 37. **And as He spake, a certain Pharisee besought Him to dine with him; and He went in and sat down to meat.** V. 38. **And when the Pharisee saw it, he marveled that He had not first washed before dinner.** V. 39. **And the Lord said unto him, Now do ye Pharisees make clean the outside of the cup and the platter; but your inward part is full of ravening and wickedness.** V. 40. **Ye fools, did not He that made that which is without make that which is within also?** V. 41. **But rather give alms of such things as ye have; and, behold, all things are clean unto you.** Cp. Matt. 23. While Jesus was still speaking to the people, a Pharisee that may have been desirous of becoming more closely acquainted with Him invited Jesus to take a meal with him, the earlier one of the day. The Lord accepted, went into the house with His host, but purposely omitted the customary washing and sat down at once at the table in the usual recumbent position. The Pharisee was greatly surprised that He had not washed before the meal. Note: Literally, we read that He had not baptized Himself; another bit of evidence that the word "baptize" in the New Testament is not confined to the act of complete immersion. The wonder of the Pharisee may have found its expression in disapproving words as well as in disgusted glances. But Jesus was now ready to teach a lesson, brought on by the circumstances. He said: Ye Pharisees clean the outside of the cup and the platter, but the inside of you is full of robbery and wickedness, thus explaining His figure at once. What was inside the cup and the platter was dishonest, stolen goods. Thus Jesus rebuked the Pharisees because they stressed outside purity, the semblance of great holiness, while their heart was full of every evil thing. This showed their foolishness; for God made both the outside and the inside, and He puts the emphasis upon the right condition of the heart. If they therefore now would give what they had, especially what they had obtained by unjust means, the things which were within the dishes, as alms, then they would straighten out matters again, then everything would be clean. In this way they would show the proper disposition of heart toward Christ and God. It is the peculiarity of all self-righteous hypocrites that they pay much attention to customs and ceremonies, but think lightly of gross sins which pollute heart and mind.

A threefold woe: V. 42. **But woe unto you, Pharisees! For ye tithe mint and rue and all manner of herbs, and pass over judgment and the love of God; these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone.** V. 43. **Woe unto you, Pharisees! For ye love the uppermost seats in the synagogs and greetings in the markets.** V. 44. **Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For ye are as graves which appear not, and the men that walk over them are not aware of them.** The Lord proceeds to characterize Pharisaism by bringing out its most objectionable features. The Pharisees were very careful and scrupulous about paying the tithe of even the smallest vegetable in their gardens, of mint, and rue, and every herb, Num. 28, 21; Deut. 14, 23. But this punctilious care did not extend to the really important virtues in life, to judgment and the love of God. Many Pharisees belonged to the Sanhedrin, the highest ecclesiastical court of the Jews; others to the local court of seven, which was found in every town. There their judgments were often unjust, partial, one-sided. And as they passed by and omitted love and faithfulness toward their neighbor, so they denied love toward God. That is the way of the Pharisees of all times, that they are painstakingly anxious in the smallest, most inconsequential things, but forget virtue and conscience in the great and important things. It is well enough to be conscientious in the little things, it was true enough that they owed that; but they most emphatically should not have left the other undone. Faithfulness in small things, but above all in the important matters of life, is required of all. And even as the Pharisees thus had a false idea of the relation of values, they possessed inordinate ambition. To occupy the seat of the elders, the place of honor in the synagogs; to receive the respectful salutations of the people in the market-places, that was the height of their ambition. And finally, they were characterized by hypocrisy and false sanctity. They were like graves without the distinguishing mark of whitewash, by which a person would be warned not to become unclean in

70) Clarke, *Commentary*, 5, 439.

touching them. Thus people came into daily contact with the Pharisees, not recognizing their falseness and hypocrisy, and were contaminated. Such pride, false ambition, and hypocrisy is found in all self-righteous people.

The insulted lawyer: V. 45. **Then answered one of the lawyers and said unto Him, Master, thus saying Thou reproachest us also.** V. 46. **And He said, Woe unto you also, ye lawyers! For ye lade men with burdens grievous to be borne, and ye yourselves touch not the burdens with one of your fingers.** V. 47. **Woe unto you! For ye build the sepulchers of the prophets, and your fathers killed them.** V. 48. **Truly ye bear witness that ye allow the deeds of your fathers; for they indeed killed them, and ye build their sepulchers.** A certain scribe, one of the teachers of the Law, who was sitting by, felt that the description which Jesus had just given of the Pharisees fitted his own case remarkably well. And so he actually invited the criticism of Jesus upon himself and his fellows by challenging Him at this point. For Christ fearlessly proceeds to say exactly what He thinks of the whole class. These teachers of the Law, in their rules of conduct for the people, weighed them down with heavy, unbearable burdens, with precepts which regulated even the most minute happenings of their daily life, but they themselves did not so much as touch the burdens with one of their fingers, for they knew better and did not care to torture themselves. How well this fits many rules of the Roman Catholic Church! The lawyers also built tombs unto the prophets with the idea of honoring them. But in reality they were continuing the evil work of their fathers. Their forefathers had put more than one of the prophets of old to death, and the present people, in erecting the tombs, agreed with the work of their ancestors. "They killed, you build; worthy sons of such fathers!" The lawyers truly had their fathers' disposition. Outwardly they honored the prophets, insisted upon observing any precept that might be found in any book of the Old Testament, but the prophecy concerning the Messiah they garbled and denied. This feature characterizes the preaching of the false prophets of all times. They refer to the Bible and praise many sections of it highly, but the great central doctrines of Scripture, especially that concerning the justification of a poor sinner through the merits of Jesus, by faith only, that they omit, and they are full of enmity toward the true messengers of the Gospel, persecuting them whenever they have an opportunity.

The last woe and its effect: V. 49. **Therefore also said the Wisdom of God, I will send them prophets and apostles, and some of them they shall slay and persecute;** v. 50. **that the blood of all the prophets which was shed from the foundation of the world may be required of this generation,** v. 51. **from the blood of Abel unto the blood of Zacharias, which perished between the altar and the Temple. Verily I say unto you, It shall be required of this generation.** V. 52. **Woe unto you, lawyers! For ye have taken away the key of knowledge; ye entered not in yourselves, and them that were entering in ye hindered.** V. 53. **And as He said these things unto them, the scribes and the Pharisees began to urge Him vehemently, and to provoke Him to speak of many things,** v. 54. **laying wait for Him, and seeking to catch something out of His mouth, that they might accuse Him.** Jesus here revealed to the lawyers the counsel of God; for He Himself, the personal Wisdom, was the representative of the council of the Trinity. The children had inherited the character, the evil disposition, of their fathers, and therefore the iniquity of the fathers was visited upon the children. The blood of all the righteous people and of all the prophets since the beginning of the world, from the blood of Abel, the son of Adam, to the blood of Zechariah, 2 Chron. 24, 20. 21, would be required at the hands of the present generation. Most solemn and impressive is the prophecy of Jesus, which was fulfilled so terribly in the destruction of the city. The Jews of the time of Jesus had received a greater measure of God's mercy than the Jews of old. They had seen and heard the Messiah Himself, and would have an opportunity to hear also the apostles. But their hatred and bloodthirstiness was even greater than that of their fathers; they utterly despised and rejected God's visitation of grace. What a warning to them that despise the preaching of the Gospel in our days! And still Jesus continues His rebuke. The lawyers had taken away the key of understanding of Scriptures. The words of prophecy concerning the Messiah were so plain that the people might have gained the proper understanding themselves, if they had been permitted to study without hindrance. But here the teachers stepped in with their false, carnal interpretation of the Bible and deprived the people of the knowledge of salvation. They themselves did not enter, and they hindered such as were anxious to enter. How like the sectarian teachers of our days, especially among the Papists!

Small wonder that the scribes and Pharisees began to be very angry at the Lord. Wherever they could, they plied Him with crafty questions, in the hope that He would give ill-considered answers. They were literally lying in wait, assiduously watching every word out of His mouth, in order to find some reason for accusing Him. That is the hatred which the truth, and he that speaks the truth, must expect at all times. The example of Christ is encouraging.

Summary. *Jesus gives His disciples a lesson in prayer, casts out a dumb devil, and rebukes the Pharisees, issues a warning to all the Jews, and utters a series of woes against the Pharisees and lawyers.*

CHAPTER 12.

Warning against Hypocrisy and Covetousness. Luke 12, 1—21.

The leaven of the Pharisees: V. 1. **In the mean time, when there were gathered together an innumerable multitude of people, insomuch that they trod one upon another, He began to say unto His disciples first of all, Beware ye of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy.** V. 2. **For there is nothing covered that shall not be revealed, neither hid that shall not be known.** V. 3. **Therefore, whatsoever ye have spoken in darkness shall be heard in the light; and that which ye have spoken in the ear in closets shall be proclaimed upon the housetops.** While the assaults of the Pharisees and scribes were going on, while they were attempting everything in their power to discredit Jesus and find some ground for accusing Him, the people, on the whole, came together to Him in greater multitudes than ever before, by the thousands, the largest gathering that had ever assembled about Him. So violently did they surge forward to come near the Lord that they literally trod one another down. Jesus, after His custom, took this opportunity to address the people on some subjects which were needful to them. His remarks were addressed chiefly to His disciples, but could easily be understood as far as His voice reached. The first topic of His discourse was that of hypocrisy. Note: The fact that many sayings of this chapter resemble, or are identical with, some of those in the Sermon on the Mount need cause no uneasiness. Jesus undoubtedly said many things which He wanted the people to know again and again, in order to impress it upon their minds. Here He warns His hearers to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which He explains as hypocrisy, while at other times He refers to their false doctrine, Matt. 16, 11. 12. Hypocrisy is like leaven; if it is given room in the heart, it begins to work and extend its influence, until finally the effects will show on the outside. A hypocrite may wear the mask of sanctity for some time and dissimulate before the eyes of men; but it will putrefy the heart and soul to such an extent that it may be revealed at a most unexpected time. For though a thing may be very carefully covered, it will come to light some time; and though it be hidden, it will be made known. The Lord now makes the application of the saying in a good sense. Instead of trying to cover up and hide their convictions, the believers in Christ should take note. They should not resort to whispering in secret, in darkness, in the inner chambers, with the object of keeping their Christian convictions from the knowledge of the people, for that is a species of hypocrisy, but should be open and fearless before all men about speaking the truth and proclaiming the Gospel. Note: The warning is needed also in our days, when church-members are going to the extent of hiding even their churchgoing from their neighbors and of removing every evidence of Christianity from their rooms, Bibles, prayer-books, religious pictures, and papers, lest some of their "friends" may smile in a pitying fashion over their time-worn superstitions! Such hypocrisy is tantamount to an open denial of Christ.

True fearlessness: V. 4. **And I say unto you, My friends, Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do.** V. 5. **But I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear: Fear Him which, after He hath killed, hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, Fear Him.** V. 6. **Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings? And not one of them is forgotten before God.** V. 7. **But even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not therefore; ye are of more value than many sparrows.** As friends Jesus addresses His disciples, a title showing His love and trust in them, John 15, 14. They should have no fear of those that can injure and destroy the body, if God should so permit. Only one fear can and should live in their hearts, a deep-seated fear, an awe and reverence which is not afraid of the punishment, but stands in holy dread of Him that judges and condemns both soul and body to everlasting destruction. For this is not a mere human tempter, who tries to harm his neighbor's soul by leading him into sin, nor is it Satan, for he has no absolute power over body and soul. It is the great God, the divine Judge, Himself. Fear of human enemies, of their contempt and of their injury, implies lack of faith in Him, which may, in turn, lead to denial and thus to damnation. And again: Why fear? So little are sparrows valued by men that they were put up in packages of five or ten and sold on the market at the rate of five for two assaria, or less than a cent apiece; so insignificant is the loss of a single hair that it is not even noticed. And yet: Not a single one of these cheapest of birds is forgotten or neglected before God; all the hairs of our head are numbered by Him, and His accounts are always right. How foolish therefore is fear, since we have His assurance that we are preferred above many sparrows in His estimation.

Confessing Christ: V. 8. **Also I say unto you, Whosoever shall confess Me before men, him shall the Son of Man also confess before the angels of God;** v. 9. **but he that denieth Me before men shall be denied before the angels of God.** V. 10. **And whosoever shall speak a word against the Son of Man, it shall be forgiven him; but unto him that blasphemeth against the Holy Ghost it shall not be forgiven.** V. 11. **And when they bring you unto the synagogs**

and unto magistrates and powers, take ye no thought how or what thing ye shall answer, or what ye shall say; v. 12. **for the Holy Ghost shall teach you in the same hour what ye ought to say.** In order to impress upon His disciples the necessity of an open and fearless confession, Jesus solemnly refers to the final judgment. A confession of Christ before men, an open proclamation of the truth and a steadfast defense of the truth, is demanded of every follower of Christ. By the grace, in the strength of Christ, we confess. And He will stand by us on the last day and confess us just as fully and much more cheerfully before the angels of God that will be present before the judgment throne. But if we deny Christ before men, we thereby prove that we have no faith in our heart. The denier of Christ will find himself denied and rejected just when he needs help and saving, on the Day of Judgment, before all the holy angels of God as witnesses. There is grave danger in denial, even in the present time, under the present conditions. For denial may result in blasphemy, of a kind spoken by the Pharisees that charged Jesus with being in league with Satan or Beelzebub. There may be such a thing as a lapse, a temporary speaking against the person of Jesus. That sin will readily find forgiveness if true repentance is found. But if one blasphemes against the Holy Ghost, against His work, then the sin, in its very nature, is outside of the pale of forgiveness. "To blaspheme the Holy Ghost means to hate and reject the Spirit of Truth wantonly, with full knowledge and will. Only such a person can do this as has felt the work of the Spirit in his heart and knows Him to be the Spirit of Truth. If any one, as a child of Satan, follows Satan in this, that he hates the Spirit who reproves him as a spirit of torture, and becomes an enemy and opponent of the truth witnessed by the Holy Ghost: such a person blasphemes the Holy Ghost, and this sin is unforgivable. The reason why it cannot be forgiven is not to be found in this, that the fountain of mercy in God's heart is stopped up, but rather in this, that the opening for repentance and faith in the heart of the sinner is stopped up." As for the disciples, however, let them feel no uneasiness and fear about their ability to defend their faith at the proper time. When their enemies would bring them before the council of their synagogs, before the rulers, and before other tribunals, it would be true indeed that they could not hope to dominate the situation by means of their own ability. The wisdom and skill of the world in oratory would be arrayed against them. But still they should not worry about their defense, for the Holy Ghost would teach them at that time and give such words into their mouths as would exactly fit the situation and tend to confound their enemies. Many a Christian has been surprised, when attacked by the enemies of Christ, at the easy flow of thoughts and words which came to him at such a time. If a person does not depend upon his own art and skill, the Lord Himself will guide his tongue in the defense of the great truths of the Bible.

Warning against avarice: V. 13. **And one of the company said unto Him, Master, speak to my brother that he divide the inheritance with me.** V. 14. **And He said unto him, Man, who made Me a judge or a divider over you?** V. 15. **And He said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness; for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.** While Jesus was addressing the multitude, there came an interruption. A man in the crowd asked Him to speak to his brother about dividing the inheritance with him, the brother apparently having found a way to evade the law, Deut. 21, 17. But Jesus, true to the principle that spiritual and temporal affairs should be kept strictly asunder, immediately shows that He was not in the least in sympathy with the man's object. He is neither a judge, to decide the case on its merits, nor is He an arbiter, to carry out any decision which He might be inclined to make. But the interruption gave Jesus occasion to draw a lesson for His entire audience and to warn them against covetousness. This is an insidious, a dangerous vice, coming upon a person with subtle wariness, and therefore to be guarded against with double care. And it is a foolish vice, for a man's life and happiness do not depend upon the great abundance of goods which he may call his own. A certain amount of food, clothing to protect against the inclemencies of the weather, and a roof against the elements, that is all that may be considered necessary for life. Whatever is beyond that entails additional care and responsibility, and will have to be accounted for most carefully on the day of the great reckoning.

The parable of the rich man: V. 16. **And He spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully;** v. 17. **and he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do because I have no room where to bestow my fruits?** V. 18. **And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods.** V. 19. **And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry.** V. 20. **But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee; then whose shall those things be which thou hast provided?** V. 21. **So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.** The foolishness of covetousness and of trusting in riches could not be brought out more emphatically than in this parable. A certain rich man's land had proved very fertile, it had

yielded a bumper crop. This was God's blessing, as it always is in such cases. But the man evidently thought the surplus was his to deal with as he deemed best, since he intended to use it in his own service. And so he planned to save the big crop with its riches by building greater barns and granaries than he had, and then to store there all the fruit of his lands and all his other personal property. But this was not for the purpose of doing the work of his stewardship before God with greater faithfulness, but to have the enjoyment of all the riches for himself. His goods were his god; in them he trusted to bring him happiness and the fulfilment of all his desires. This man, like most rich men, made the mistake of considering the additional wealth an asset, whereas it was a liability. Every dollar that God blesses a person with beyond the actual needs of life for himself and his family is not an asset in God's sight, but a liability. The prayer of Agur, Prov. 30, 8. 9, is very necessary in our days when the love of money, covetousness, is stalking through the land, sowing dissatisfaction and strife in every station of life. But into the midst of these rosy meditations thundered the voice of God: Fool, man void of sense and understanding, in this night thy life is asked of thee. And the greater reckoning will follow. That which thou hast gathered, whose will it be? But even as foolish are all people that think only of gaining riches for themselves, the goods of this world, neglecting to seek the true wealth, the spiritual, heavenly gifts. "Total bankruptcy is the end of the covetous man. He is brought into judgment with his name lost, for before God he is a fool; with his soul lost, for that is required of him for eternal punishment; with the world lost, for that he must leave behind; with heaven lost, for he has neglected to deposit a capital in heaven." 71) "He that lives without God will never enjoy a single penny, and will have no happiness of his goods, for he has a bad conscience, as the Scripture says Is. 57, 21. . . . These people have no heart towards God, therefore they are afraid of death every moment; they are not secure, neither within nor without; they fear that the house will burn down, that thieves will come and steal their money; there is no happy heart, no joy, no rest, neither by day nor by night." 72)

Of Trust in God and Preparation for Christ's Coming. Luke 12, 22—59.

Warnings against care: V. 22. **And He said unto His disciples, Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life what ye shall eat; neither for the body what ye shall put on.** V. 23. **The life is more than meat, and the body is more than raiment.** V. 24. **Consider the ravens; for they neither sow nor reap; which neither have storehouse nor barn; and God feedeth them: how much more are ye better than the fowls?** V. 25. **And which of you with taking thought can add to his stature one cubit?** V. 26. **If ye, then, be not able to do that thing which is least, why take ye thought for the rest?** There is a close connection between the warning spoken to the people in general and that addressed to the disciples in particular, for covetousness may have its root in care and worry for the matters of this earthly existence. God has given life to us, therefore He will also provide food to sustain it; He has given us our body, and therefore He will also provide the clothing to shelter it. He has given the greater, that which has more value in His sight, and therefore He may be trusted to take care of the smaller and less important also. The ravens, the birds of the air, are our examples for perfect trust in the providence of God. They neither sow nor reap; they have neither storehouse nor granary; and yet God takes care of them. So we should heed the lesson they teach. "There the birds fly past our eyes, with little honor to us, that we might well take off our hats to them and say: My dear doctor, I must confess that I do not understand the art which thou knowest. Thou sleepest through the night in thy nest, without care. In the morning thou arisest, art happy and joyful, sittest on a tree, singest, praisest, and thankest God; then thou seekest thy food and findest it. Why, what have I, for an old fool, learned that I do not act in the same way? If the little bird can desist from worrying and acts in such a case like a perfect saint, and yet has neither land nor barn, neither box nor cellar; it sings, praises God, rejoices, and is happy, for it knows that it has One that cares for us, whose name is Father in heaven: why, then, do we not also act thus, we that have the advantage that we can work, till the ground, gather the fruits, put them together, and keep them for the time of need? And yet we cannot omit the shameful worrying. Do as the birds do; learn to believe, sing, be happy, and let your heavenly Father care for you." 73) All the worrying of a person will also not succeed in doing what God can easily do, add a cubit to the stature. And if we cannot even do what seems so self-evident and simple according to the laws of nature, why should we worry about things which are entirely in God's hands, and which He has always taken care of for our welfare?

A lesson from the fields: V. 27. **Consider the lilies, how they grow; they toil not, they spin not; and yet I say unto you that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.** V. 28. **If, then, God so**

71) Besser, quoted in Stoeckhardt, *Biblische Geschichte des Neuen Testaments*, 187.

72) Luther, 3, 1060.

73) Luther, quoted in Besser, *Bibelstunden*, 1, 578.

clothe the grass, which is to-day in the field, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, how much more will He clothe you, O ye of little faith? V. 29. And seek not ye what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, neither be ye of doubtful mind. V. 30. For all these things do the nations of the world seek after; and your Father knoweth that ye have need of these things. V. 31. But rather seek ye the kingdom of God, and all these things shall be added unto you. The lilies of the field, with their velvety texture and their inimitably gorgeous colors, present the second object-lesson. For they do not ply the needle, neither do they spin or weave. And yet they are not only clothed, but their raiment is of such a kind that even rich King Solomon, with the almost fabulous riches at his disposal, could not compare with one of them in this respect. And Jesus goes even farther than this. Even the grass, that has little beauty to commend it to the average observer, uses better judgment. It blooms and flourishes in the field to-day, and to-morrow it is used as fuel for the ovens of the people. And yet it is clothed by God for the short space of its life; how much rather will God, then, give the necessary clothing to His children. "There stand flowers of every color, decorated in the most beautiful manner, that no emperor or king is equal to them in ornament. For all their ornament is a dead thing. But a flower has its color and beauty, and is a natural, living thing. And it is not to be understood that it grows thus by chance. For if it were not God's special order and creation, it would never be possible that one be so much like the other, having the same color, leaves, number of petals, veins, indentations, and other measures. If God, then, uses such diligence in case of the grass, which exists only that it may be seen and that the cattle may eat it, is it not a sin and a shame that we still doubt whether God will actually provide clothing for us?" 74) What foolishness, therefore, to be concerned about eating and drinking; to be full of hesitation and doubt, to look anxiously for help, like the mariner in a tempest-tossed vessel! These all are things which the people of the world, the heathen, make their prime concern; but as for you, the Father knows that ye need these things. Only one thing there is which should be the object of anxious search, that is the kingdom of God. To be a member of this kingdom, to have and keep true faith in the heart, through which such membership is insured, that is the one fact which should give every Christian his chief concern, on account of which he daily prays the Second Petition. All the other things that are necessary for the sustaining of life are added without worry or care, by the providence of God.

The little flock: V. 32. **Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the Kingdom. V. 33. Sell that ye have, and give alms; provide yourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not, where no thief approacheth, neither moth corrupteth. V. 34. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.** Only a little flock is that of the disciples in the midst of the great mass of the nations of the world; only a few, a mere handful, that are earnestly and anxiously seeking the Kingdom. But these shall not fear, for the Kingdom shall be theirs according to the good pleasure of the Father, because it pleases Him, in His great mercy, to give it to them, as a free gift. "As though He would say: You have not earned it; yea, you have earned hell; but what happens to you, that is nothing but grace, promised to you out of the good pleasure of the Father; therefore only believe, and you shall surely have it. It is a great thing that we are children of God and brethren of Christ, that we have power over, and are lords of, death, sin, devil, and hell; but such power not all men have, but only such as believe. For he that believes that God is our Father and we are His children, he need not fear any one; for God is his Protector, in whose power all things are, and all men's hearts in His hand." 75) Rather than that the believers should set their hearts and minds upon the things of this world and be filled with care for the body, they should, according to the advice of the Lord, sell their goods and give the proceeds to charity. Then their hearts will be torn loose from all earthy considerations and will be fixed all the more easily and firmly on eternal riches. The possessions of the disciples will then be contained in a purse which will never grow old, for they are the riches of God's grace in Christ Jesus; no thief is able to come near and abstract that inexhaustible, precious treasure, and no moth can destroy the white garment of the righteousness of Jesus which has been given to us by faith. How necessary to become ever surer of the heavenly calling in Jesus the Lord by a constant consideration of passages like the present!

Christian alertness: V. 35. **Let your loins be girded about and your lights burning; v. 36. and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord when he will return from the wedding, that, when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately. V. 37. Blessed are those servants whom the lord when he cometh shall find watching; verily I say unto you that he shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them. V. 38. And if he shall come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find them so, blessed are**

74) Luther, quoted in Besser, 1, 580.

75) Luther, 11, 2193.

those servants. V. 39. And this know, that if the goodman of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched, and not have suffered his house to be broken through. V. 40. Be ye therefore ready also; for the Son of Man cometh at an hour when ye think not. A state of watchful waiting is that which is expected of the Christians of the last days. They shall be like servants whose master has gone to his wedding-feast and expects to return home with his bride. Their loins will be girt, for immediate service, without delay or dallying; the lights will be burning, to avoid all confusion. Every servant will be in his exact place and occupied with his own duty. Just as soon as the master comes, and at the moment of his knocking, they will be ready to open the door and to be of service to him, with joyful alertness. Such faithfulness is a rare virtue, but happy are they that have learned this virtue, for theirs will also be a rare reward of grace. Solemnly Jesus declares that the master will exchange rôles with the servants, urging them to recline at the table, while he himself would gird up his undergarments and "help them to portions of the marriage-feast he has brought home with him." And should the coming of the lord be delayed to the second watch, just before midnight, or to the third, just after midnight, and the same conditions obtain, those servants would find themselves rewarded for their faithfulness far beyond their deserts. Thus the disciples of Christ will be found ready at all times to receive their Lord Jesus Christ, when He returns to judge the quick and the dead. And although they are merely fulfilling their duty in living lives of constant, prayerful watchfulness, yet He will give them a reward of mercy far surpassing their fondest hopes and expectations.

The lesson of alertness is emphasized by another parable. Just as a thief may come at any hour of the night, and just when he is least expected, and just as the householder therefore will be watchful at all times, lest the thief make his way into the house and carry out his intentions, thus the disciples of the Lord should be on their guard lest the last day come upon them while they are unprepared. To be ready and alert always, that is their duty, always to look forward to the coming of the last day; for the Son of Man, as the great Judge, comes at an hour when He is least expected.

Peter's question and the Lord's reply: V. 41. **Then Peter said unto Him, Lord, speakest Thou this parable unto us, or even to all?** V. 42. **And the Lord said, Who, then, is that faithful and wise steward whom his lord shall make ruler over his household to give them their portion of meat in due season?** V. 43. **Blessed is that servant, whom his lord, when he cometh, shall find so doing.** V. 44. **Of a truth I say unto you that he will make him ruler over all that he hath.** V. 45. **But and if that servant say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming, and shall begin to beat the menservants and maidens, and to eat and drink, and to be drunken,** v. 46. **the lord of that servant will come in a day when he looketh not for him, and at an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him in sunder, and will appoint him his portion with the unbelievers.** Cp. Matt. 24, 45—51. Peter interrupted the Lord with the question whether the parable, and therefore also its lesson, was meant for the disciples only or for all the people present. While Jesus did not answer directly, the continuation of the discourse made it plain that He had reference mainly to His disciples. The believers should be ready at all times, they should be examples of watchfulness for all men. The Lord's parable is a fine bit of vivid description: A servant selected for a position of special trust by his master, given the administration of the entire household, which includes, above all, the dealing out of due portions of food; the faithful servant found engaged in this service upon the return of the master and rewarded far beyond his deserts, receiving the charge of all the goods of the master; the unfaithful servant trusting in the further delay of the master, by which he will gain time for his wicked deeds, beating the slaves of both sexes, taking their portion of the food for himself, to gorge himself to gluttony and drunkenness; the unexpected return of the master at an unusual hour; the awful punishment meted out to the scoundrel. The faithful servant is a type of the true disciple of Christ, especially of the faithful pastor. Those that serve Christ in their fellow-men will rule with Christ in the world to come. And the pastors that have given to every one of their fellow-servants their due portion of the Word of God, and have sought only to minister after His great example, they will be rewarded with mercy far beyond all hopes and understanding. But the faithless disciples, that lived in careless security, that believed in enjoying life, that refused to take part in the duties of charity toward their neighbor, and even were guilty of cruelty to their fellow-men, they will receive their portion with the wicked in eternal damnation. Above all is this true of hirelings that do not care for the flock of Christ, but try to gain from them what they want for a life of ease, that neglect the preaching of the Gospel, that feed the souls with the husks of human wisdom. They will receive the greater damnation.

Christ's summary: V. 47. **And that servant which knew his lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes.** V. 48. **But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be**

much required; and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more. The Lord here states the principle according to which punishments are given in the kingdom of God, and especially on the Day of Judgment, not according to an absolute decree, but according to the measure of fault. There is the servant that was fully informed as to the will of his Lord, but deliberately chose to ignore this will and to do as he pleased. His punishment will be heavy, and it will consist of many stripes. On the other hand, a servant may have been in ignorance of the master's will, but still committed something which deserved punishment; he will receive only few stripes. This is not to be understood as though a servant could plead ignorance when he had deliberately ignored a command. Ignorance is no excuse where knowledge might have been obtained. The rule is that the demand of the master is in proportion to the gifts dispensed, whether these be temporal or spiritual. In every case the person concerned is only a steward having charge of the gifts. A rich man cannot dispose of his property as he chooses; a person with unusual powers of intellect has no right to put them to uses pleasing his own ambition or selfishness; one to whom God has given an extraordinary measure of spiritual knowledge cannot choose to ignore this talent. The day of reckoning is coming; and the reckoning will be severe, but just. In the entire matter of sanctification, therefore, a Christian will be alert at all times.

The dissension caused by the Gospel: V. 49. **I am come to send fire on the earth; and what will I, if it be already kindled?** V. 50. **But I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!** V. 51. **Suppose ye that I am come to give peace on earth? I tell you, Nay; but rather division;** v. 52. **for from henceforth there shall be five in one house divided, three against two and two against three.** V. 53. **The father shall be divided against the son and the son against the father, the mother against the daughter and the daughter against the mother, the mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law.** Cp. Matt. 10, 34—36. The Gospel is to some people, whose minds the god of this world has blinded, a savor of death unto death, 2 Cor. 2, 16. It brings a fire of controversy which results in fierce trials and conflicts for the believers. The sooner this fire therefore is kindled, the better it will be for the faithful. And it is not as if Jesus would go out unscathed while His followers must bear the many crosses that are laid upon them because of their discipleship. The baptism of His last great Passion looms up before Him with such a threatening aspect that He is pressed on every side, both with fervent desire and with fear on account of the last ordeal. And so the disciples must not live in the foolish hope and idea that they will escape the same or a similar ordeal. Contention, dissension, strife, enmity will follow the preaching of the cross at all times, causing divisions even in the midst of the most closely knit households. Friendships of long years' standing, the most intimate ties of blood-relationship have been disrupted because of opposition to the Gospel. This the believers of all times should know, lest they be offended. They dare not expect their lot to be more pleasant than that of their Lord.

A last word to the people: V. 54. **And He said also to the people, When ye see a cloud rise out of the west, straightway ye say, There cometh a shower; and so it is.** V. 55. **And when ye see the south wind blow, ye say, There will be heat; and it cometh to pass.** V. 56. **Ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky and of the earth; but how is it that ye do not discern this time?** V. 57. **Yea, and why even of yourselves judge ye not what is right?** V. 58. **When thou goest with thine adversary to the magistrate as thou art in the way, give diligence that thou mayest be delivered from him, lest he hale thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and the officer cast thee into prison.** V. 59. **I tell thee, thou shalt not depart thence till thou hast paid the very last mite.** Cp. Matt. 16, 2. 3. 25. 26. It was a word of impressive warning which Jesus spoke to the people, as He had spoken to the Pharisees on a former occasion. The people in general had not profited by the Lord's ministry of preaching, although they resembled their leaders very strongly in certain external particulars. When the clouds came up from the west, from the Mediterranean Sea, it was a sure sign of rain, and the prognostication of the people was made accordingly. When the wind blew from the south, from the desert, it brought a withering heat; this they could predict with unfailing certainty. But the time and circumstances under which they were living the people could not judge properly; there they could not draw the right conclusions. They were a shallow lot, without judgment in spiritual things. Such is also the generation of these latter days, with wisdom and good judgment in external, worldly matters, but without understanding of the spiritual needs of our day and age.

The Jews were so void of proper judgment in matters concerning morality and religion that they did not even judge rightly in matters pertaining to their own private affairs. They did not know that placableness is a virtue which must be cultivated at all times, if it can be done without denial of the truth, Rom. 12, 18. The Lord here uses the picture of a creditor and a debtor on their way to court. The rational, expedient thing to do under the circumstances is for the debtor to seek a settlement

out of court; he should make it a matter of all diligence to get away from the creditor. Should the debtor fail in his attempt, he may find himself dragged before the judge, the judge, in turn, making short work of him by committing him to an officer whose duty it was either to collect the debt after the judge had decreed payment, or to put the debtor into jail till the debt was paid. In such a case even the very last lepton, half of a quadrans, less than half a cent, was exacted. Thus people in general should not wait and hesitate about seeking reconciliation with their adversary in time. It may become too late before they realize it. Death will overtake such persons, and they will find God an implacable Judge in such matters. To keep the example of God in Christ Jesus before his mind at all times and to pray the Fifth Petition with a full understanding of its import, will be the aim of every true Christian.

Summary. *Jesus warns against hypocrisy and covetousness, teaches true trust in God and the proper preparation for His own coming to Judgment, and admonishes the people to cultivate placableness.*

CHAPTER 13.

Last Admonitions to Repentance.

Luke 13, 1—9.

The lesson of the Galilean tragedy: V. 1. **There were present at that season some that told Him of the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices.** V. 2. **And Jesus, answering, said unto them, Suppose ye that these Galileans were sinners above all the Galileans because they suffered such things?** V. 3. **I tell you, Nay; but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.** V. 4. **Or those eighteen upon whom the tower in Siloam fell and slew them, think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem?** V. 5. **I tell you, Nay; but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.** At the same time, upon the same occasion, when Jesus had spoken the words of solemn warning concerning the Judgment and how to avert it. The current opinion was that there was a direct connection between the greatness of the transgression and the severity of the punishment. Some of the people present, therefore, gave Jesus an interesting piece of news which they had received from Jerusalem through some pilgrims that had recently returned. Pilate, the procurator of Judea, had punished subjects of Herod, the tetrarch of Galilee. A heathen governor had polluted the Temple of God with human blood. The incident is not related by Josephus, but fits in well with the character of the Galileans and with the disposition of Pilate. The Galileans were very restive under the Roman yoke and strongly inclined to sedition. And Pilate had the vice of most weak natures: when his temper snapped the leash, unbridled passion held sway. There had probably been a demonstration in the Temple which threatened to assume the proportion of a riot, and Pilate had promptly dispatched some soldiers and executed speedy punishment. Some commentators think that this incident caused the enmity between Pilate and Herod, chap. 23, 12. The questioners implied that so sudden a death in the midst of so sacred an employment must be regarded as a special proof of the wrath of God upon those so slain. But Jesus corrects this notion. The slain Galileans were no sinners in an extraordinary measure, above all other Galileans, since they had suffered these things. A similar case, from the standpoint of the present discussion, was that of the eighteen persons upon whom the tower of Siloam, probably one built over the porticoes of the pool, fell. It was wrong to suppose that these were guilty above all the people that lived at Jerusalem. Very emphatically Jesus says, in either case: Not at all, I tell you. All the Jews, and also His hearers, were equally guilty, and a like fate might befall them at any time; unless they repented, they all might perish and be destroyed in the same way. The Lord here gives a rule according to which we may judge and measure the misfortunes and sufferings of others. The suffering of the world is the result of sin. In the case of the unbelievers the suffering is nothing but punishment, with a view, however, of leading them to repentance. In the case of believers suffering of every kind is chastisement at the hands of the Father, who punishes in time that we may be spared in eternity. If a Christian is struck by misfortune, he will not use the word "trial" in order to justify himself. Rather will he say, in true humility, that his many sins have merited far greater and more severe punishment, and will never ask the question with regard to his own crosses or those of others, Wherewith have I earned this? But above all, one thing must never be done, and that is to argue from the severity of the suffering, drawing conclusions as to the greatness of the guilt, Job 42, 7; John 9, 2. 3.

The parable of the fig-tree: V. 6. **He spake also this parable: A certain man had a fig-tree planted in his vineyard; and he came and sought fruit thereon, and found none.** V. 7. **Then said he unto the dresser of his vineyard, Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig-tree, and find none; cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground?** V. 8. **And he, answering, said unto him, Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it and dung it;** v. 9. **and if it bear fruit, well; and if not,**

then after that thou shalt cut it down. A word-picture preaching an earnest lesson. A certain man, apparently one of means, had a fig-tree planted in his vineyard, in good soil, from which he naturally expected fruit. He waited for some time, but finally he voiced a complaint to the vine-dresser, to the gardener in charge of the vineyard. The fig-tree was supposed to bear fruit three times a year, and the owner had not yet found a single fig on it. It seemed useless to waste any more time and work on its cultivation; it ought to be chopped down, since it interfered with, and spoiled the ground for, more productive fruit-trees. The master no longer felt like coming and coming again, and always being disappointed. But the vine-dresser interceded for the tree. He begged for only one more year of grace, in which he intended to try all his art and labor in loosening the soil about the roots, in putting fertilizer into the ground; there might be some chances of coaxing the tree to bear fruit the coming year. But if not, then the doom of the tree is sealed, and the master may carry out his intention. The unfruitful fig-tree is a type of the Jewish people. During the entire time of the Old Testament the Lord had vainly looked for fruit commensurate with the amount of labor and the cost which He had put into the vineyard of His Church. Israel had received a rich measure of grace, but had not reacted in kind. It was like the unfruitful vineyard of which the Lord complained Is. 5, 1—7. The fourth year, for which the love of the vine-dresser, Jesus, pleaded, was the time of mercy which had dawned with the ministry of John, had burst into full brightness with the preaching of Jesus, and would continue thus during the ministry of the apostles. Here the vine-dresser wanted to dig about and dung the fig-tree with the evidences of His most searching love, of His holiest zeal, and finally, through His servants, by the preaching of His suffering and death, of His resurrection and sitting at the right hand of Power. But the extra time of grace went by, the people as a whole brought no fruits worthy of repentance; and so finally the judgment of God was carried out upon the disobedient people: Jerusalem was destroyed and the Jewish nation rejected. Note: There is a lesson here for all times, for God deals with all men in a similar way. His justice is tempered with patience; He waits long before He condemns. The mercy and love on the part of Jesus succeeds often in extending the time of grace for a people. But finally the most loving patience must come to an end and justice be carried out.

The Crippled Woman Healed.

Luke 13, 10—17.

The healing on the Sabbath: V. 10. **And He was teaching in one of the synagogs on the Sabbath.** V. 11. **And, behold, there was a woman which had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years, and was bowed together, and could in no wise lift up herself.** V. 12. **And when Jesus saw her, He called her to Him, and said unto her, Woman, thou art loosed from thine infirmity.** V. 13. **And He laid His hands on her; and immediately she was made straight, and glorified God.** Jesus, in accordance with the purpose indicated in the parable, did not cease His efforts to win the Jews to the Word of salvation. He continued His custom of teaching in the synagogs on the Sabbath-days. And so it happened on one occasion that there was a woman present who was suffering with a sickness which contracted her whole body, bending the upper part forward upon the lower and thus altogether preventing her from straightening up. She was in bondage to a foreign spirit, the spirit of her sickness, whose chains kept her from raising her head. Jesus, ever sympathetic where the woes of others are concerned, called her to Him as soon as His eye lit upon her bent figure. And even while she was approaching Him, He spoke to her as though the cure were already an accomplished fact, stating that she was delivered from her infirmity. And no sooner had He laid His hands on her than she became erect and burst into words of praise. It was a manifestation of the glory of the Savior in full accord with His usual healing ministry.

Christ's defense against the ruler of the synagog: V. 14. **And the ruler of the synagog answered with indignation because that Jesus had healed on the Sabbath-day, and said unto the people, There are six days in which men ought to work; in them therefore come and be healed, and not on the Sabbath-day.** V. 15. **The Lord then answered him and said, Thou hypocrite, doth not each one of you on the Sabbath loose his ox or his ass from the stall, and lead him away to watering?** V. 16. **And ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan hath bound, lo, these eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath-day?** V. 17. **And when He had said these things, all His adversaries were ashamed; and all the people rejoiced for all the glorious things that were done by Him.** How deeply ingrained was the idea of mechanical Sabbath observance in the mind of the average Jewish teacher is evident from this incident. The ruler of the synagog became highly indignant, not because Jesus had healed the woman, but because He had done so on the Sabbath. He had too much respect for Christ's ability to defend Himself to attack Him directly, so he spoke to the audience, striking indirectly at Jesus, rebuking them sharply for bringing any sick people to be healed on the Sabbath; for there were six days on which they could attend to such work. It sounded as though the ruler of the synagog wanted to prevent the people from tempting Jesus to break the Sabbath. But the

Lord (called so with a purpose, as the Lord of the Sabbath) retorted to this condemnation with special force, calling the ruler of the synagog and all those that felt as he did about the matter, hypocrites, cheap, dissembling actors. What about their own case? They loosed their dumb beasts from the manger on the Sabbath; they even led them forth to water; they gave them to drink, probably not by carrying the water to them, since the Jewish elders had forbidden that, but at least by drawing the water from the well. Mark the contrast: A daughter of Abraham on the one hand, an ox and an ass on the other; the one bound by Satan for eighteen years, the others suffering from thirst merely for a few hours. The argument of Jesus suffered no gainsaying. The elders of the Jews, though not convinced, were confounded and ashamed, brought to shame before the audience; and all the people present were delighted over all the admirable, wonderful things that were performed by the Lord. Note: To this day it is hypocrisy if sanctity is attached to mere external matters, as, that the so-called Sabbath is kept with Puritan strictness, by the enforcement of blue-laws, while many important, necessary things, as benevolence to the poor, miserable, and needy, are omitted. "Therefore learn here from Christ what the true understanding of the Sabbath is, and how we must maintain the distinction between the outward use of the Sabbath, so far as the time, hour, and place is concerned, and the necessary works of love which God demands of us at all times and in all places; that we should know that the Sabbath was ordained for the sake of man, and not man for the sake of the Sabbath, Mark 2, 27, and thus man is the lord of the Sabbath, and is to use it for his own and his neighbor's necessity, thus being enabled to keep this and other commandments of God without hindrance. For the right understanding of the Third Commandment is really this, that we use the Sabbath to hear and learn the Word of God, how we may keep all other commandments both toward God and our neighbor and help others to this end through love." 76)

Parables and Teachings. Luke 13, 18—35.

The parables of the mustard-seed and the leaven: V. 18. **Then said He, Unto what is the kingdom of God like, and whereunto shall I resemble it?** V. 19. **It is like a grain of mustard-seed, which a man took and cast into his garden; and it grew and waxed a great tree; and the fowls of the air lodged in the branches of it.** V. 20. **And again He said, Whereunto shall I liken the kingdom of God?** V. 21. **It is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened.** In the effort to bring the great truths of the kingdom of God home to His hearers, to teach them in what way the Word takes hold of the hearts and exerts its wonderful power upon them, in what manner the Gospel is spread throughout the world and people are being added to the Church of Christ at all times, the Lord uses the simplest and homeliest examples. He points to incidents, to happenings of every-day life with which the people were familiar, allusions which they ought to be able to understand. Cp. Matt. 13, 31—33; Mark 4, 30—32. The seed of the mustard-tree is very small, and yet, if it sprouts in good soil and grows without hindrance, it grows to be a good-sized tree, whose branches are large enough to serve as a roosting-place for quite a number of birds. The Church of Jesus was at first so small as to appear insignificant, but in the course of time the power of the Gospel, which was proclaimed in the Church, proved its omnipotent quality by overcoming opposition of every nature, so that now people from every nation have been added to the number of believers. A pinch of leaven may seem small in comparison with three measures of flour, and yet its power is such as to leaven the entire mass. Even thus the power of the Word is exerted in the hearts of the individual believers as well as in the Church at large, influencing people even beyond the organization of the so-called visible Church. The power of God unto salvation is a power also unto sanctification. And the high ideals of Christianity have inspired the conduct of entire nations.

Entering in at the strait gate: V. 22. **And He went through the cities and villages, teaching, and journeying toward Jerusalem.** V. 23. **Then said one unto Him, Lord, are there few that be saved? And He said unto them,** v. 24. **Strive to enter in at the strait gate; for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able.** V. 25. **When once the master of the house is risen up and hath shut to the door, and ye begin to stand without and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us; and He shall answer and say unto you, I know you not whence ye are,** v. 26. **then shall ye begin to say, We have eaten and drunk in Thy presence, and Thou hast taught in our streets.** V. 27. **But He shall say, I tell you, I know you not whence ye are; depart from Me, all ye workers of iniquity.** V. 28. **There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrust out.** V. 29. **And they shall come from the East, and from the West, and from the North, and from the South, and shall sit down in the kingdom of God.** V. 30. **And, behold, there are last which shall be first, and there are first which shall be last.** The final goal of Jesus was Jerusalem; thither He was making His way by easy stages. But, according to His

76) Luther, 12, 1970.

plan, He stopped in the cities and villages along the way, continuing the work of His ministry with unabated faithfulness to the last. Teaching was the main occupation of Jesus at this time, the outstanding feature of His work. And His teaching doubtless touched again and again upon the admonition to be prepared for the last great day with its judgment. This fact caused some person in one of the places visited by Jesus to ask Him the half-idle, half-serious question, whether there would be only a few to be saved. He that is concerned seriously about his salvation does not put the question that way, but rather sets his mind upon the way of attaining salvation for himself. Jesus therefore does not answer the question directly, but addresses the questioner and all that share his curiosity in a serious admonition. Every person should strive earnestly, struggle as seriously, and exert himself as assiduously as an athlete coveting victory, to enter into heaven through the narrow gate. Heaven is here pictured as a house from which certain people exclude themselves. They strive to enter, they seek a way, but of their own choosing, and therefore their efforts are idle, their attempts futile: they are not able to accomplish their purpose. There is only one Way, and that is Jesus Christ, the Savior. Faith in His salvation will open the door; every other method is bound to fail. "Why, for what reason, can they not enter? For that reason that they do not know what the narrow gate is; for that is faith, which makes a person small, yea, altogether nothing, that he must despair of his own works and cling only to God's grace, forgetting all other things because of that. But the saints of Cain's kind think that good works are the narrow gate; therefore they do not become humble, do not despair of their works, yea, they gather them with great sacks, hang them around themselves, and thus endeavor to get through; but they have as little chance to go through as the camel with its great hump has to pass through the eye of a needle." 77) The hour is coming when the master of the house, God Himself, will arise from His throne. Jesus, sitting at the right hand of God the Father Almighty, through the Gospel is calling out to all men: Come, for all things are now ready. He is waiting for them to accept the invitation, He has set a certain time of grace. But when that time has elapsed, then He will close the door. He will return in heavenly glory before the whole world, and then the door to heaven will no longer be open. The time of the world and the time of grace will then be at an end. Then some will want to come to the closed door and rap and call to the Lord to open to them. But it will be too late. They have not heeded the invitation in time, and now the Lord gives them the terrible answer: I know you not. They do not belong to His own, they have not turned to Him in repentance and faith. Even if they insist upon it, as the Jews could do in the full sense of the word, that He had lived in their midst, had eaten and drunk before them, that He had taught them on their streets, they will receive the same answer, and they must stand back from Him and be condemned as workers of iniquity. Note: On the last day those that were Christians in name only will try to frame similar excuses, reminding the Lord of the fact that they heard the Word of God in a church where the pure doctrine was proclaimed, that they were baptized, that they were instructed in the Christian doctrine. And even those that merely lived in a Christian community, and occasionally permitted Christian influence to graze them, will come and try to state this fact as an argument. But all arguing will be too late. The fact remains that all such people did not accept Jesus and His Word, but stubbornly remained in their sins, and therefore will die and be condemned in their sins. Then, when it is too late, remorse will come. Then there will be weeping in helpless fury and in delayed sorrow for sins; then there will be gnashing of teeth over a foolishness that has been recognized as such too late. And not the least part of damnation will consist in this, that these poor souls will see the blessedness of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in heaven, while they themselves will be rejected and condemned to the everlasting abyss of hell. And not only will the patriarchs and prophets enjoy the bliss of the kingdom of heaven, but there will be representatives from the East and from the West and from the North and from the South, all reclining at the feast of joy and happiness before the throne of God. And all this the unfortunate late-comers, that procrastinated once too often, will be able to see, Luke 16, 23. 24. The Lord here uses the same thoughts which He has employed also in other places where He has touched upon the necessity of being prepared. There are resemblances to the story of the ten virgins, to the rich man and poor Lazarus, to the Last Judgment, to the story of the centurion of Capernaum. And the gist of the warning is always the same, not to depend upon outward membership of the Church, not to delay real repentance until it is too late. For there are last that will be first, and there are first that will be last. Such as believe, by reason of the circumstances of their life, that they are members of God's kingdom, as the Jews did on account of their descent from Abraham, will find themselves last and excluded from the blessedness of heaven. But many that became members of the Church from conviction of their hearts, without having had the advantages which church-members had from their youth, may become first, since they have repented truly and realized the things that pertain to their peace. All things being equal, the person that grows up in the midst of the

77) Luther, 12, 209.

Church, is baptized in infancy, learns the truth of Scriptures in a Christian school, and is always surrounded by the best conditions, should have the best knowledge and the soundest faith in Jesus, the Savior. But if such a person disregards these blessings and the greater responsibility resting upon him, his punishment will be all the greater, as one that despised the riches of the mercy and grace of God, not knowing that the goodness of God was calling him to repentance, chap. 12, 47. 48.

The warning against Herod: V. 31. **The same day there came certain of the Pharisees, saying unto Him, Get Thee out and depart hence; for Herod will kill Thee.** V. 32. **And He said unto them, Go ye and tell that fox, Behold, I cast out devils, and I do cures to-day and to-morrow, and the third day I shall be perfected.** V. 33. **Nevertheless I must walk to-day and to-morrow and the day following; for it cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem.** Jesus was still in the territory of Herod Antipas, and this man was being driven by the furies of an evil conscience. Whether Jesus was John the Baptist resurrected or not, He was in the way. As one commentator states it: "In every work of Jesus he saw the hand of John the Baptist extended from the grave toward him; in every word concerning the Judgment that Jesus uttered he heard again the voice of John: Thou murderer of prophets!" It is hardly likely that the Pharisees had been commissioned by Herod to bring this message to Jesus. It was rather thus with these enemies of the Lord: They had exhausted every possible means that they could think of to make Him desist from the work of His ministry with the exception of touching His body, and they hoped to intimidate Jesus and cause Him to remove from the country. Upon Jesus the request: Go away from here, because Herod wants to kill Thee, made no impression. A threat of this kind could not make Him desist from the usual work of His ministry. Therefore He answers according to the character of the warning, bidding the warners go and take His return message to Herod. Jesus calls Herod a fox, both on account of his crafty, cruel disposition, and because of the fact that he had become a fox, a destroyer, in the vineyard of the Lord, Lam. 5, 18; Song of Sol. 2, 15. The threat had no effect whatever upon Jesus. The scorn of the Idumean tyrant could not force the Prophet of Galilee to yield. He had work to do in the near future, and that work would be done. He must continue to cast out demons and to cure sicknesses as He has done hitherto, for the time set in the counsel of God is near. Then, according to His own will, at the time appointed by Him, the end will come. That was the obligation resting upon Him, and that He would carry out. And He adds, with bitter sorrow, that He must die in Jerusalem, the murderess of prophets, chap. 11, 51. It is in accordance with God's will that His career shall end in that city. In the same way the disciples of Christ of all times, the believers, fulfil their day's work, the portion decreed to them by God. And in this no power of earth and hell can hinder them or shorten the time which God has fixed for their work. But when the hour has come which God has intended as the last, then they will have completed their course, then they will have finished their labors and may enter into the rest of the saints.

A cry of sorrow over Jerusalem: V. 34. **O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not!** V. 35. **Behold, your house is left unto you desolate; and verily I say unto you, Ye shall not see Me until the time come when ye shall say, Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord.** Cp. Matt. 23, 37. 38. Luke adds this cry of Jesus at this point, and it is more than likely that Jesus spoke these words and similar ones more than once. The city of Jerusalem, the capital of the nation, which should have been leader in welcoming the prophets of the Lord and showing them every honor, had gotten a reputation sadly at variance with this ideal. To stone the prophets and kill the messengers of the Lord, that was the name which Jerusalem had gotten in the course of the centuries. Jesus Himself had tried, with all the wealth and fervor of His Savior's love, to gather the people of the city about Him, to bring them the joyful assurance of their redemption through His blood. His solicitude had been unwavering during all the years of His ministry, like that of a brooding hen anxiously concerned about the welfare of her chicks. He had wanted, but they had not wanted. "Thus and no other way it was to happen, and it always has gone thus, that the greatest harm and damage has been done to Christ, to His Word, and to His Church by those that have presumed to be the holiest and best." 78) And so they brought their punishment upon themselves: their dwelling, the city of Jerusalem, was destroyed and left desolate barely four decades later. They will not see Christ again until the day when He returns in His glory, and when even His enemies, who will then be completely confounded, will have to confess that Jesus is Lord. Then their lips, for the chattering of their teeth, will hardly be able to form the words, and their heart will utter curses and imprecations; but they will have to acknowledge Him whom they killed as the Lord of all.

Summary. *Jesus utters some last warnings to be prepared for the Judgment, heals the crippled woman on a Sabbath, teaches and admonishes in parables, repudiates the threat purporting to come from Herod, and cries out over Jerusalem.*

---

78) Luther, 7, 1623.

CHAPTER 14.

Christ the Guest of a Pharisee.

Luke 14, 1—14.

Healing a man afflicted with dropsy on the Sabbath: V. 1. **And it came to pass, as He went into the house of one of the chief Pharisees to eat bread on the Sabbath-day that they watched Him.** V. 2. **And, behold, there was a certain man before Him which had the dropsy.** V. 3. **And Jesus, answering, spake unto the lawyers and Pharisees, saying, Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath-day?** V. 4. **And they held their peace. And He took him, and healed him, and let him go;** v. 5. **and answered them, saying, Which of you shall have an ass or an ox fallen into a pit, and will not straightway pull him out on the Sabbath-day?** V. 6. **And they could not answer Him again to these things.** The Pharisees continued their method of attempting to provoke Jesus to some rash utterance, chap. 11, 53. 54. It was for this reason, also, that He was invited by one of their number, as once before. His host was one of the chief, or first, among the Pharisees, occupying a position of honor among them, since they had no regular rulers. He may have been a member of the Sanhedrin, the highest council of the Jewish Church, or he may have been known for the excellency of his learning. In the house of this man Jesus was a guest; for feasting on the Sabbath was common among the Jews, though they were permitted to serve only cold dishes. The Pharisees had an object in inviting the Lord, for they were observing Him most carefully and suspiciously. They had, as they thought, arranged a trap for Him. For when Jesus came into the house, there was, as though by chance, and yet by most cunning planning, a dropsical man. The omniscient Christ knew their thoughts, answering them as though they had spoken aloud. He addressed Himself to all the scribes and Pharisees present, for they were all equally guilty. His question was the same which He had asked upon other occasions, whether it was the right, the proper, the obligatory thing to heal on the Sabbath-day or not. His question implied an assertion in the affirmative, and they found themselves unable to contradict Him, preferring to say nothing, since their heart and conscience told them that they could not deny the fact which Jesus wanted to convey. Works of love were indeed permitted on the Sabbath-day, even according to the strictest Mosaic law. And so Jesus fulfilled the greatest law of all: putting His hand upon the sick man, He healed him and sent him away. Then the Lord turned once more to the Pharisees and answered their unspoken thoughts, which condemned the healing on the Sabbath. He asked them whether it would not be self-evident for them, in case one of their domestic animals, a mere beast of burden, should fall into a pit, an empty cistern, to draw the poor victim of the accident up at once, without the slightest hesitation, without paying any attention to the fact that it might be the Sabbath-day. Once more they were silenced, not being able to contradict the statement of the Lord, since it was impossible to do anything but acknowledge the truth of His argument. Note: The Pharisee, in inviting Jesus, professed friendship, affection, and respect for Him, while at the same time he was preparing snares to catch Him. Thus many children of the world will simulate interest and regard for the Gospel and its ministry, while in reality they are trying to draw out the Christians, in order to ridicule their belief in the words of Holy Scripture. Also: The same Sabbath fanatics that made the life of Jesus miserable at times are at work also in our days, insisting upon all manner of outward observances of Sunday, though many of them are not one whit concerned about the pure preaching of the Gospel. "The doctrine of Sabbath has mainly this object, that we learn to understand the Third Commandment correctly. For to sanctify the Sabbath means to hear God's Word and to help our neighbor wherever possible. For God does not want the Sabbath kept so holy that we should on that account leave and forsake our neighbor in his trouble. Therefore, if I serve my neighbor and help him, though this means work, I have kept the Sabbath rightly and well; for I have performed a divine work on it." 79)

A parable teaching humility: V. 7. **And He put forth a parable to those which were bidden, when He marked how they chose out the chief rooms, saying unto them,** v. 8. **When thou art bidden of any man to a wedding, sit not down in the highest room, lest a more honorable man than thou be bidden of him,** v. 9. **and he that bade thee and him come and say to thee, Give this man place; and thou begin with shame to take the lowest room.** V. 10. **But when thou art bidden, go and sit down in the lowest room, that, when he that bade thee cometh, he may say unto thee, Friend, go up higher; then shalt thou have worship in the presence of them that sit at meat with thee.** V. 11. **For whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.** The eyes of Jesus were always observing the manner in which people behaved under various conditions of life, for He drew lessons from everything. At the ordinary feasts of the Jews there was a good deal of informality, but at the wedding-suppers the question of rank was very important. Jesus had noticed upon this occasion that the guests all made an attempt

79) Luther, 13a, 894.

to take the sofas of honor, the first pillows, at the head of the table. And so He teaches them a lesson concerning the higher sphere of morality and religion. At a wedding-feast the guests should not strive for the most honored seats, for it might easily happen that one to whom greater respect is due on account of his rank or station is among those invited. And what a humiliation it would be then if the host would openly request the forward guest to give up his place to the guest of honor, while the other shamefacedly and with ill grace would have to move to the last place! The Lord therefore advises the opposite method, to choose the lowest place, for then it might well happen that the humble guest would be invited in the presence of the assembled guests to move farther to the head of the table, thus receiving honor before all that reclined with him at the tables. It was not a mere question of prudence and good form which Jesus here broached, but it was a rebuke of the presumption and pride of the guests. Incidentally, it illustrates a rule which finds its application in the kingdom of God: Every one that exalts himself will be humbled, and he that humbles himself will be exalted. He that exalts himself, places himself above his neighbor, boasts of his own merit and worthiness before God, he will be humbled, will be excluded from the kingdom of God. But he that humbles himself before God, and consequently places himself also below his neighbor as a willing servant to minister unto his needs as occasion offers, he will be exalted, he will receive honor in the kingdom of God. For such humility expresses the true disposition of a disciple, it is an evidence of a repentance which is conscious of its own unworthiness, and of faith, which glories only in the cross of Jesus and finds comfort only in His mercy.

Advice to the host: V. 12. **Then said He also to him that bade Him, When thou makest a dinner or a supper, call not thy friends, nor thy brethren, neither thy kinsmen, nor thy rich neighbors, lest they also bid thee again, and a recompense be made thee.** V. 13. **But when thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind,** v. 14. **and thou shalt be blessed; for they cannot recompense thee; for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just.** A lesson in true, selfless service. Upon the occasion of a dinner or supper the invitations should not go out to friends and relatives and brothers, and especially not to rich neighbors, if this were intended as a bait for receiving greater favors in return. If any apparent service is rendered with that idea in mind, to receive in return, and perhaps more than was given, it does not come under the heading of charity and kindness, and should not be advertised as such. On the other hand, if, as the Law required of the Jews, Deut. 14, 28. 29; 16, 11; 26, 11—13, a kindness is shown to such as are in need of it, to the poor, to those suffering with sickness or bodily debility, to the lame, to the blind, then the person performing such unselfish works will be happy in the pleasure of having done a kindness not to be repaid by the recipients. Such charity would flow out of faith and would therefore receive a reward of mercy at the hands of God on the last day. He would receive in return, just as though he were worthy of it, such kindness as would be altogether out of proportion to the small labor of love which he was glad to show his unfortunate neighbors. He will, on account of this proof of a faith which must come forth in works of love, be looked upon as just, as justified, in the sight of God. Note: Jesus, in this parable, does not condemn the festival meals of friends, relatives, and neighbors, otherwise He would not have accepted the invitation of the Pharisee, but He would call attention to this fact: If any one on account of such intrinsically harmless parties and gatherings forgets the poor and unfortunate and neglects to show the proper manifestation of Christian charity, he places a false valuation upon social intercourse and forfeits the heavenly reward; he will have no part in the resurrection of the just for the recompense of the just. For where there is no charity toward one's neighbor, faith also will be missing. Luther gives as the summary of the entire Gospel-lesson, vv. 1—14: "Charity and necessity must be the norms for all laws; and there should be no law that should not be bent and interpreted according to love; if there be, it should be abrogated, though an angel from heaven had made it. And all this serves for the purpose that our hearts and consciences be strengthened thereby. Then, also, the Lord teaches us how we shall humble ourselves and subject ourselves to others." 80)

The Great Supper. Luke 14, 15—24.

The invitation: V. 15. **And when one of them that sat at meat with Him heard these things, he said unto Him, Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God.** V. 16. **Then said He unto him, A certain man made a great supper and bade many;** v. 17. **and sent his servant at supper time to say to them that were bidden, Come; for all things are now ready.** One of the guests at the feast of the Pharisee was deeply impressed by the words of Christ, and especially by His allusion to the happiness which would be the lot of those that would be included in the resurrection of the just. The consummation of such glory filled him with a deep and ardent longing for the blessings which might be expected up in heaven. His remark may have been due mainly to the enthusiasm of the moment, but it served to call forth a very beautiful parable from the Lord. Blessed is he that eats bread in the kingdom of God,

80) Luther, 11, 1685.

in the time of the fulfilment of the Church of Christ in heaven, where all those that have been accounted righteous will eat of the eternal pleasures and drink of the water of life, world without end. Jesus, in answering upon this exclamation, addressed Himself primarily to the speaker, but also to all the rest that were gathered about the tables. A certain man, a man of means and influence, as the story shows, made a great feast, prepared a supper of unusual magnitude. Great this feast was, as well on account of the abundance of refreshing foods as on account of the fact that it was intended for many guests. In accordance with the elaborate plans of the host, many were invited; the first invitation went out to a great number of people. When the time of the feast had come, the master of the house sent out his own servant, trusted and faithful, to give the customary second reminder or repetition of the first invitation. It was an urgent call: Come, for now are ready all things! The guests were asked to come to the feast prepared for them, and at once, for everything was now in readiness for them.

The excuses: V. 18. **And they all with one consent began to make excuse. The first said unto him, I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it; I pray thee have me excused.** V. 19. **And another said, I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them; I pray thee have me excused.** V. 20. **And another said, I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.** With one consent, as if by previous agreement, the invited guests began to excuse themselves, courteously enough, but with an air of finality which cannot be overlooked; they begged off, they did not want to come. The excuses of three of them are given as examples. One had bought a piece of ground, and just at that time the necessity devolved upon him to look it over; the purchase had not yet been made unconditional, and so it was absolutely necessary for him to go out at just this moment. His business was more important than the supper: he begged to be released from his promise. A second invited guest had just purchased five yoke, or pair, of oxen, and he was on the way to examine them. He was not even so anxious as the first man to make his refusal appear unavoidable: he wanted to go, it pleased him to do so, his business was also dearer and more important to him than the invitation. A third coolly stated to the servant that he had married a wife and therefore could not come. His marriage had taken place since he had first received the invitation, and that, he considered, absolved him from any social duties that he may have promised. It is not the factor of carnal pleasure that is here emphasized, but merely the fact that in his new happiness he cared nothing for distractions.

The result: V. 21. **So that servant came, and showed his lord these things. Then the master of the house, being angry, said to his servant, Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind.** V. 22. **And the servant said, Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded, and yet there is room.** V. 23. **And the lord said unto the servant, Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled.** V. 24. **For I say unto you, That none of those men which were bidden shall taste of my supper.** The servant was obliged to bring his master the news of the rejection of the invitations. The latter naturally became angry over such behavior, but immediately thought of a plan by which he might procure guests for his feast in a short time. The servant was to lose no time in going out, both on the broad streets and on the narrow lanes of the city, and to bring into the house of the master the poor and the weak, or crippled, and the blind and the halt. The servant had not anticipated his master's command, but now hurriedly fulfilled it, returning with the report that the instructions had been carried out to the letter, but that there was still room. Then, as a last resort, the master sent the servant out to the country, along the highways and hedges, on the main roads, as well as on the footpaths running through the fields, alongside the hedges. Whomever he should find there, he should invite urgently, compellingly, since the poor people might not want to consider the fact of their having been invited seriously. The object of the master was frankly to fill his house. But so far as the first guests were concerned, the solemn declaration is made that not one of them would so much as taste of the feast which had been prepared with such care.

The meaning of the parable in the light of New Testament fulfilment is clear. The master of the house is God Himself, the almighty, but also gracious and merciful Lord. "The preaching of Christ is the great, glorious supper, to which He asks guests in order to sanctify them through His Baptism, comfort and strengthen them through the Sacrament of His body and blood; that they should be in need of nothing, that there be a great plenty and every one be satisfied." 81) The food to be provided was thus the Gospel with all its glories, yea, Christ Himself, complete justification, forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation. When Jesus came into the world, the hour of the great supper had come, Gal. 4, 4. 5. He Himself is the Servant of the Lord in the most exclusive sense, Is. 42, 1; 49, 6; 52, 13; 53, 11. Personally, through His herald John the Baptist, and through the apostles He repeated the invitation which had been issued through the prophets, that the time had come to which all the patriarchs and prophets had looked forward, that the kingdom

81) Luther, 13a, 715.

of God had come near them. Christ went to the children of the house of Israel, for them His personal ministry was intended; they were the chosen people of God, Rom. 3, 2; 9, 5. To them and to their children the promise was published first. And so Christ journeyed back and forth through the length and breadth of the country of the Jews, preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom. And the apostles followed up His work, proclaiming the Gospel to the Jews first. But Israel as a whole wanted nothing of the glorious news pertaining to their salvation, they refused the invitation. Their minds were centered in earthly things, they expected a temporal kingdom of the Messiah. And their leaders, having a show of sanctity, used this as a cloak for their covetousness and their seeking for pleasure. They despised and rejected the Gospel of the mercy of God in Christ Jesus. Then God in His anger turned from them. Jesus sought the poor and unknown among the Jewish people, those that were spiritually sick, halt, and blind. He called the publicans and sinners to Him and assured them that salvation was theirs. Poor fishermen, former publicans, reformed sinners, were the members of Christ's flock, 1 Cor. 1, 26—28. And finally Jesus, through His apostles and other messengers, brought the invitation of God out into the world of the Gentiles, that were aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, Eph. 2, 12. From all nations of the world the Lord is calling men to His great supper, that they may receive the fulness of His goodness and mercy. He is calling urgently and pleadingly; His call is sincere and powerful. He prepares the way for the preaching of the Gospel by the proclamation of the Law, that the sinner may learn to know his helplessness and rely upon the righteousness of the Redeemer all alone. "That is what it means to compel, if we fear the wrath of God and desire help from Him. If that has been accomplished through preaching, and the hearts are broken and terrified, then preaching is continued in the words: Dear person, do not despair, though thou art a sinner and hast such a terrible condemnation upon thee; rather do this: thou art baptized, now hear the Gospel. There thou wilt learn that Jesus Christ died for thy sake and has made satisfaction for thy sins on the cross." 82) The merciful call of God is effective through the Gospel: that is the way in which a person comes to the great supper. Christ calls and pleads; the table is set; the full redemption is obtained; God is merciful to men for Christ's sake. But if a person does not come and does not want to come, then it is his own fault. The Lord has called, and He sincerely offers to all men the riches of His grace. Those that despise His call will be excluded, by their own fault, from the joys of salvation, from the eternal supper of bliss in heaven.

82) Luther, 13a, 722.

The Obligations of Christ's Discipleship.

Luke 14, 25—35.

Bearing the cross: V. 25. **And there went great multitudes with Him; and He turned and said unto them,** v. 26. **If any man come to Me and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple.** V. 27. **And whosoever doth not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple.** When Jesus left the house of the Pharisee to continue His journey, there followed Him, as usual, great multitudes of people, going with Him for the usual reason, mere external inquisitiveness. To these Jesus expounded the requirements of true discipleship. The mere following after Christ for the sake of seeing miracles signified and availed nothing. If any one comes to Him, with a view to close and permanent discipleship, sacrifices are necessary from the standpoint of this world. First of all, the love of Christ must precede all other love, even that of the nearest friends and relatives, Matt. 10, 37. Absolute devotion to Him and to His cause requires that natural love to one's relatives be relegated to the background, that life itself be denied, that the heart be torn away from temporal possessions, that the cross of Christ be willingly shouldered, though it sink in deeply and bruise unmercifully. All rival masters and interests must be put away that the love of the great Master may be supreme. If this devotion and work should demand the final sacrifice of life, according to His example, even that must be willingly given for the sake of the love He bore us.

Two parables for emphasis: V. 28. **For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it?** V. 29. **Lest haply, after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him,** v. 30. **saying, This man began to build, and was not able to finish.** V. 31. **Or what king, going to make war against another king, sitteth not down first and consulteth whether he be able with ten thousand to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand?** V. 32. **Or else, while the other is yet a great way off, he sendeth an embassage, and desireth conditions of peace.** V. 33. **So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be My disciple.** Foolish is he that counteth not the cost. If a man wants to build a tower, a fine, high structure, prominent before all the buildings in the neighborhood, prudence will dictate that he sit down first and calculate the cost very carefully. His plan will be gone over thoroughly; the material is painstakingly grouped and added; the exact cost of the project is computed. For if the man should start to build and then find that it is impossible for him to finish up, he will become an

object of ridicule for all the passers-by. In the same way, prudence will govern the actions of a king who has broken off diplomatic relations with another ruler. He will call in all his counselors and make a very careful calculation whether he will be able to carry out his plans in case he should decide to assume the offensive. And in case the matter seems dubious, he will prefer to enter upon negotiations with the enemy in time, and find out his conditions of peace. Either parable teaches the necessity of considering the costs; either one represents the absurdity of those that undertake to be disciple of Jesus Christ shall require no less difficulties they are to meet with, and what strength they have to enable them to go through with the undertaking. "He that will be a true disciples of Jesus Christ shall require no less than the mighty power of God to support him, as both hell and earth will unite to destroy him." Because complete self-renunciation is required, earnest consideration is absolutely unavoidable. So much the discipleship of Christ demands, and so much the true disciple will give cheerfully.

A final warning: V. 34. **Salt is good; but if the salt have lost its savor, wherewith shall it be seasoned?** V. 35. **It is neither fit for the land, nor yet for the dunghill; but men cast it out. He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.** The very fact of self-renunciation brings out the genuineness of the discipleship, which must have the same seasoning power as salt. Cp. Matt. 5, 13; Mark 9, 51. As long as salt is strong, it has value for seasoning; but if it becomes insipid (almost a contradiction in itself), it has lost its purpose in the world. It can no longer be used in the preparation of foods for the table; it is neither earth nor fertilizer; out they cast it, since it is worthless, mere refuse. If the purifying influence of the Christians in the midst of the unbelieving world of these latter days ceases, if the Church is no longer a power for good, by the preaching that is done from its pulpits and by the example of the life of its adherents, then savor and worth are lost at the same time. The reason for existence can no longer be urged in such a case. Every individual Christian that fails of his wonderful destiny due to the call of God in him, that does not in speech and life confess Jesus the Christ, is deceiving himself, as well as others, but not God. He can well distinguish between seasoning salt and savorless salt. It is an impressive lesson, emphatically brought out by the Lord's "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear!" For many so-called Christians mere outward formality seems to be sufficient. But God looks upon heart and mind, and demands sincerity in His confession and service.

Summary. *Jesus heals a dropsical man on the Sabbath, gives a lesson in humility and true altruism, tells the Parable of the Great Supper, and explains some of the obligations of Christian discipleship.*

CHAPTER 15.

Parables of the Love of Christ to the Lost.

Luke 15, 1—10.

The murmuring Pharisees: V. 1. **Then drew near unto Him all the publicans and sinners for to hear Him.** V. 2. **And the Pharisees and scribes murmured, saying, This Man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them.** The fifteenth chapter of Luke is, as one commentator has called it, the golden center of this Gospel, revealing in a wonderful way the love of the Savior for the lost and condemned sinners. The Lord here exhibits the unspeakable riches of His merciful love to all men, but especially to those that feel the need of that mercy. There were nearing to Him at that time, the evangelist writes. As iron filings are attracted to a magnet, so the message of love and forgiveness which Jesus proclaimed drew the broken hearts to His grace. It was not merely the attraction of human sympathy and kindness, but it was the sweetness of the Savior's love and the glorious promise of pardon, full and free. Publicans and sinners they were, despised and cast out of the synagogs throughout the land; they were not permitted to associate on a plane of equality with the Jews in good standing. But these outcasts came, not like the majority of the other people, primarily for the purpose of witnessing miracles of various kinds, but to hear Him. The blessed words of salvation attracted them; they could not hear enough of the healing message which Christ proclaimed with unwearying kindness. Others, however, were present that had a different opinion concerning such intimacy of the Lord with publicans and sinners. The Pharisees and scribes murmured with indignation against Him, saying that He made Himself the equal of the scum of the lowly people by receiving them and eating with them. The mocking and derisive words of the Pharisees have now become the song of praise in the mouth of believing Christians: "Jesus sinners doth receive!"

The Parable of the Lost Sheep: V. 3. **And He spake this parable unto them, saying,** v. 4. **What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost until he find it?** V. 5. **And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing.** V. 6. **And when he cometh home, he calleth**

together his friends and neighbors, saying unto them, Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost. V. 7. I say unto you that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons which need no repentance. The Lord did not at all consider it an insult to His dignity that the Pharisees classed Him with the publicans and sinners. But He resented their attitude toward the poor outcasts of society whom His love comforted. For that reason He presents this picture of His merciful love. Pointedly the Lord says: "What man of you." In their own affairs of daily life every one would act as Jesus here describes the owner of the sheep. A hundred sheep the man has, a goodly number, making the loss of a single one seem insignificant. It would seem that the man could well afford to lose one. But the owner thinks differently. If but a single one is absent, and as soon as he discovers the loss, he proceeds forthwith to recover it. He knows the dangers of abyss and swamp, of panther and wolf, of thorns and poisonous plants. He leaves the ninety and nine, though the place be desolate and far from home, and sets out after the lost member of the flock with unceasing, unabating fervor of search, until he has found it; that object must be accomplished. And having found it, his tender solicitude does not cease. Full of joy and gladness he lays it upon his shoulder, preferring to carry it safely, lest it become overweary. Even now, its strength is practically spent. And coming home, he shouts out the glad news to his neighbors and friends, bidding them come and rejoice with him, since he has found the sheep that was lost. Jesus Himself makes the application of the story, saying most impressively that in the same way there is joy in heaven, before God, over a single sinner that repents, more than over a large number of just people that are not in need of repentance. Since this is true of God and all His holy angels, that they rejoice greatly over every further repentant sinner, how much more would it be expected of Jesus, who is present here on earth and in the sight of all men, that He show His gratification over these former wilful and malignant sinners that have now turned from the evil of their ways! The ninety and nine just persons that need no repentance are evidently people like the Pharisees and scribes, who in their own opinion are not in need of a Savior. Cp. Matt. 9, 12. 13. They believe that they are just, accepted before God and men, that their outwardly unblemished life places them above the need of repentance. They have no idea of the actual filthy condition of their hearts. And so they are left in the wilderness while the lost sheep is taken home.

What the Lord here says of the seeking, finding, carrying of the lost sheep is full of beautiful significance. His merciful love embraces the lost, the forsaken, all sinners. There is comfort for all. "For upon that fact I am baptized and here have the seals and letters in the Gospel, that I am His dear sheep, and that He is the good, pious Shepherd, who seeks His lost sheep and deals with me altogether without the Law, demands nothing of me, neither drives nor threatens nor terrifies; but shows me nothing but sweet mercy and humbles Himself below me and takes me upon Himself that I lie on His back and suffer myself to be carried. Why should I fear the terror and thunder of Moses, and that of the devil in addition, since I am secure in the protection of that Man who gives me His piety, and everything that He has, for my own, and carries me and holds me that I cannot be lost, while I remain a sheep and do not deny the Savior nor deliberately reject Him?" 83) Jesus, the Shepherd of the souls, leads the sinners to repentance by having His Word proclaimed to them. With His Word He searches, calls, pleads, until He finds the lost sinner. "Just as the sheep cannot guard itself nor take care that it does not go astray unless the shepherd always points the way and leads it; it cannot return to the right way nor come to the shepherd, but the shepherd must follow after it and search so long until he finds it; and when he has found it, he must take it upon his back and carry it that it may not again be terrified, driven away, and be seized by the wolf: even so we can neither help nor counsel ourselves to come to the quietness and peace of conscience, and to escape from the devil, death, and hell, unless Christ Himself gets us and calls us to Him through His Word. And even if we come to Him and are in faith, we are not able to keep ourselves therein, . . . but Christ, our Shepherd, must do it all alone." 84) And finally the good Shepherd takes His sheep home into the fold of heaven, giving every single one the bliss ineffable that has been prepared for them before the foundation of the world.

The parable of the lost piece of silver: V. 8. **Either what woman having ten pieces of silver, if she lose one piece, doth not light a candle, and sweep the house, and seek diligently till she find it? V. 9. And when she hath found it, she calleth her friends and neighbors together, saying, Rejoice with me; for I have found the piece which I had lost. V. 10. Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth.** The scope, tendency, and lesson of this parable is identical with that of the previous one. A single piece of silver out of ten which a woman possesses may not seem a large sum to lose (it corresponded roughly in value to the denarius, worth not quite seventeen cents), 85)

83) Luther, 11, 1264.
84) Luther, 11, 1268.
85) Barton, *Archeology and the Bible*, 166.

but the owner evidently places a different estimate upon it. She lights a lamp, she sweeps the house, she seeks most diligently till she finds the lost coin. In the first parable the tender solicitude of the Redeemer was brought out; here the unremitting diligence and search for the lost is emphasized. And then comes the joy in the same form of expression, a joyful shout to acquaint the people with the fact of her success. Thus also there is joy, wonderful and inexpressible, in the presence of the angels of God over a single sinner that repents and is won for the kingdom of heaven. The worth of a single soul exceeds that of the whole world, Matt. 16, 26; Mark 8, 37; Jas. 5, 20. Some commentators make the application in such a way as to say that the Holy Ghost's work in the heart of the sinner is here pictured. Just as the woman searched the whole house with all diligence, so the Spirit of God, in the work of regeneration, is of a cleansing and illuminating kind. He is not turned away by the frightful aspect of the natural heart's depravity; He is not deterred by a long and arduous search for a backsliding sinner. Note also: The lost piece of silver is a very fitting emblem of a sinner that is estranged from God and has become a slave of sinful habits. The longer a piece of money is lost, the less probability is there of its being found again; it will lose its glittering newness and be covered with dirt and grime: so the sinner sinks ever more deeply into the filth of sin, loses his character and standing among men, and deliberately defaces the image of his Maker from his heart. Let such a one beware lest his time of grace expire and the searching mercy of the Spirit be turned in other directions.

The Prodigal Son. Luke 15, 11—32.

The reckless departure: V. 11. **And He said, A certain man had two sons;** v. 12. **and the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his living.** V. 13. **And not many days after, the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living.** This story has been called the Gospel within the Gospel, since it brings out the fundamental thought of the message of grace so beautifully, the acceptance of the sinners without any merit or worthiness on their part. Two sons a certain man had, both of them in a good home, with all the comforts and advantages which the word implies. But the younger one felt the fretful stir of youth. The boundaries of the home place were altogether too narrow for him, and the restrictions placed upon him by the paternal jurisdiction seemed altogether too galling. The first step of his desire for freedom, as he may have termed it to himself, was the demand that his father give him the goods to which he would fall heir after his father's death. It has been custom in the Orient from times immemorial for sons to demand and receive their portion of the inheritance during their father's lifetime; and in many countries the parent could not legally refuse to comply with the request. So the father, realizing that the heart of the boy was set upon his goods and not upon his person, as filial love would demand, divided his entire living, all that he had, to his two sons, the older probably receiving the home place, and the younger, money. So the younger boy now had the means to carry out any desires that he may have been secretly cherishing. And he determined within a few days to slip off the irksome fetters of parental authority and supervision. He heeded the voice of the oldest delusion in the world, namely, that things in the distance, which wear the halo of desirableness, too often prove mirages which lure people to destruction. He was determined to have his fling; he gathered together all his property, being in haste to escape into wild liberty or license. Home is usually a dear place, and homesickness takes hold of a great many children that are obliged to leave its sacred boundaries, but here selfishness and wilfulness had taken possession of his heart. Far away he went, the farther the better, and then he dissipated and flung away all that he had in a dissolute life. The journey led recklessly to final degradation. That is a picture of a person that has grown up in the house of God, in the midst of the Christian congregation, but does not realize the greatness of the blessings which attend him there. He turns his back to the Church, goes out into the world, and runs with the children of the world into the same excess of riot, in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revelings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries, 1 Pet. 4, 4.

Folly and repentance: V. 14. **And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want.** V. 15. **And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine.** V. 16. **And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat; and no man gave unto him.** V. 17. **And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger!** V. 18. **I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against Heaven and before thee,** v. 19. **and am no more worthy to be called thy son; make me as one of thy hired servants.** The young fellow, after the manner of his kind, undoubtedly had friends in droves while his money lasted and he was willing to spend it recklessly. His indulgence may at first have whetted the edge of appetite, but overindulgence wears out the power of enjoyment. When his money was gone, his so-called friends, after the immemorial manner of their kind, evapo-

rated into thin air, leaving him severely alone. And the poor fellow, no longer a good fellow, having literally destroyed all that he had, found himself face to face with direst extremity and most distressing poverty, since a great famine came into that same land. The result of wastefulness and lack of food combined is dire want. He was at the point of starvation. And so he attached himself to a citizen of that country which he had thought to bless with his presence. The man did not want him, could not use him, in fact; to feed another mouth in the time of dearth is no easy matter. He now had work, that of a swineherd, despised above all other occupations by the Jews, and he could sleep out in the stable; but the amount of food he received from his master was inadequate for keeping body and soul together. He was soon reduced to such straits that he would have been glad to fill his spoiled stomach with husks, the pods of a wild fruit, that of the carob-tree. That was the food of the pigs entrusted to him; but he was denied even the roughage of the beasts. That is the result of sin. It is not only a reproach to the sinner, but it leads to the destruction of both body and soul. The sinner must find out what misery and anguish he brings upon himself if he leaves the Lord, his God. In his misfortune he is forsaken by God and man, he has no comfort nor support, the abyss of despair yawns before him. Or if fortune seems to smile upon him and good days fall to his lot, he still lacks peace of mind and a satisfied conscience: there is no peace in his soul. Happiness is possible only in communion with God; to leave that means to give up true happiness.

At last the heaping up of miseries and griefs had some effect upon the young man. He realized the situation; he came to his true, sane self; he awoke as from a deep, unpleasant dream; he saw himself and his whole life in the true light; he began once more to judge things according to the standards of a well-instructed conscience. He called to mind the laborers of his father that were now, in comparison with his own miserable situation, living in affluence, having more bread than they needed, while he was actually starving to death by degrees. His pride was broken, his unruliness a matter of the past. He decided to go at once to his father and make a full, an unequivocal confession of his sin, that he had transgressed against God in heaven, whom every sin strikes, in the first place, and against his father. He feels his utter unworthiness to be called a son of such a father any longer, he has forfeited all filial claims; the best he can hope for, if his father would be so merciful, is to be given a position as hired workman on the farm. That is true contrition and repentance, when the sinner searches his own heart and being, fully acknowledges his transgressions, admits the justice of the divine punishment without restriction, and is fully persuaded as to his own unworthiness. There must be no palliation, no equivocation. He that covereth his sins shall not prosper; but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy, Prov. 28, 13.

The return: V. 20. **And he arose and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him.** V. 21. **And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son.** V. 22. **But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand and shoes on his feet;** v. 23. **and bring hither the fatted calf and kill it; and let us eat and be merry;** v. 24. **for this my son was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found. And they began to be merry.** True repentance is not satisfied with resolutions, its sincerity must be proved by actions. The young man therefore carried out his intention without delay. As a proud and haughty, disobedient and unfilial youth he had left home; with a humble, broken, and contrite heart he crept back through the familiar scenes. But the merciful goodness and the cheerful forgiveness of his father was even greater than he had dared to expect after the treatment which the boy had accorded him. The love of a father is not so easily destroyed. Day after day he had been on the lookout for the son of his old age; never had he given up the hope of seeing him return some time. The father's loving eye therefore was the first to espy the boy, although the half-starved, tattered tramp may have resembled only distantly the well-nourished young man that had so flippantly turned his back upon his home a short time ago. All this the father saw in a glance, but it did not fill him with repulsion, but only with the deepest sympathizing pity. To walk was too slow; he ran down to meet his boy, he fell on his neck, he kissed him most tenderly. Before the boy even opened his mouth, the father read in his eyes, in his entire appearance what motive had brought him back home. He indeed accepted the confession of sins which the boy made, but would hear nothing more. As the young man's repentance and confession were unrestricted, so the father's forgiveness was unconditional. The love of the father here pictured is but a weak type and picture of the love of God toward sinners, of His manner of dealing with repentant sinners. His eyes search for them; His Word pleads with them to return from the path of transgression; His heart overflows with commiserating sympathy at their blindness and foolishness, by which they cast themselves into misery, grief, and anguish. He is reconciled to all sinners through the death of Jesus Christ; in the Redeemer He has forgiven them all their trespasses. When He therefore sees the evidences of repentance,

His heart goes out to them, and He showers upon them the fulness of His mercy, grace, and kindness. He gives them the assurance, confirmed with a solemn oath, that all their sins are forgiven, that their transgressions are cast into the depths of the sea. And His promises then give to the faint-hearted, penitent sinner new trust and courage, by which the belief is engendered that he has again been accepted as a child of the heavenly Father.

The father, in the overwhelming joy of his heart, reinstates the son into all the rights of sonship. To some servants that came hurrying up he gave the command to make haste that the wretched rags might be taken from his son and he be clothed in the dress becoming to his station, with a golden ring on his finger and with proper sandals on his feet. They should then take the calf which was being fattened for the slaughter and use its meat to prepare a great feast, since the entire household was to take part in the joy of this occasion. All the symbols of the filial state, all the honors due to the son of the house, should here be brought out. And the father hurriedly explains that this wanderer, if they had not known him before or had not recognized him in his rags, was his son. Dead indeed he had been, lost to all good, given to all evil; but now he had returned to real life, now he was in truth the son of the house, since he had found himself and stood in the relation of a true son to his father. And so the feast was made ready at once, and the celebration went ahead with great joy. Thus the lost children of God that return to Him with penitent hearts are not admitted to heaven in such a way as barely to enter. No, the forgiveness of God is complete. There is joy in heaven over every sinner that comes to repentance.

The older son: V. 25. **Now his elder son was in the field; and as he came and drew nigh to the house, he heard music and dancing.** V. 26. **And he called one of the servants, and asked what these things meant.** V. 27. **And he said unto him, Thy brother is come, and thy father hath killed the fatted calf because he hath received him safe and sound.** V. 28. **And he was angry, and would not go in; therefore came his father out and intreated him.** V. 29. **And he, answering, said to his father, Lo, these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment; and yet thou never gavest me a kid that I might make merry with my friends;** v. 30. **but as soon as this thy son was come, which hath devoured thy living with harlots, thou hast killed for him the fatted calf.** V. 31. **And he said unto him, Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine.** V. 32. **It was meet that we should make merry and be glad; for this thy brother was dead and is alive again; and was lost and is found.** A picture of the prim and proper, sanctimonious and self-righteous person. The older son, whom no temptation had apparently ever assailed, was busy in the field during all this time, and may not have returned till toward evening. But when he did return, the unusual bustle and commotion on the place, which had recently been as quiet as a cemetery, caused him to wonder. The sound of the musical instruments which accompanied the choirs of singers could be heard for some distance. He was filled with astonishment and displeasure that a festival should have been arranged without his knowledge, and, calling one of the servants to him, he inquired what all that meant. The servant answered, as well as he could, probably according to the part that he had been obliged to take in the feast. The fatted calf had been slaughtered because the brother was home again and well. This news filled the older brother, not only with disgust, but with anger. A sense of wrong and general unfair treatment took hold upon him. So far as he was concerned, he had washed his hands of the good-for-nothing youngster; and the latter might have been lost and could have perished for all he cared. While the father, against whom the sin had been committed, was full of joy over the repentant son, the older son, in his peevish mood, does not even want to be seen in the company of the wastrel. Thereupon the father went out to him and pleaded with him, thus showing as much love and patience with this boy as with the other. The anger and the entire behavior of the older son was altogether unreasonable. It was spiteful talk to accuse his father of never having given him so much as a kid to provide a feast for himself and his friends. And his self-praise of his willing service and of his keeping the commands of the father was a veiled attack on his brother. The gentle rebuke of the father was very properly administered. What the father had acquired since the division of the goods was his to dispose of as he pleased. But he had been generous to the older boy beyond his duty, for he had shared all with him, had given him the full and unrestricted use of his property. Therefore he admonishes him finally to be joyful with the rest, since the dead one had returned to life, since the lost one had been found. The older son is a type of the self-righteous Pharisees of all times, that are always boasting of their good works and merits and begrudge the poor sinners the unmerited grace of God. That they themselves and all that they can perform owe this to the goodness of God, that fact seems never to strike their minds. That the fact of their never having been tempted to such an extent as many a fallen person is in itself an unmerited grace, that has never occurred to them. But God is merciful above all comprehension of man. According to His gracious will, He wants all men to be saved. He is not only happy over the repentance of

publicans and sinners, but He tries to soften the hearts of proud Pharisees as well.

The entire parable has reference to the lost and prodigal sons and daughters of all times, showing to all sinners the way of redemption. But also the believers, the true children of God, that are enjoying the fulness of God's grace, should learn the lesson of this parable, to understand ever more fully what sin and grace includes. The entire life of every Christian is a continual repentance. True Christians, by daily contrition and repentance, turn away from the world and its allurements, turn to God the Father, pray daily in true faith for forgiveness of all trespasses, and are glad of the experience of God's love toward sinners. Such Christians will rejoice from their hearts whenever a prodigal son or daughter returns and asks for admission; they will give them a reception which is in accordance with the merciful will of God, never forgetting that every one that is saved receives this mercy in the same way as the thief on the cross, by grace alone.

Summary. *Jesus teaches the Pharisees the meaning of God's love for the lost by telling the parables of the lost sheep, the lost piece of silver, and the prodigal son.*

CHAPTER 16.

The Parable of the Unjust Steward and Its Lessons. Luke 16, 1—18.

The accusation of unfaithfulness: V. 1. **And He said also unto His disciples, There was a certain rich man which had a steward; and the same was accused unto him that he had wasted his goods.** V. 2. **And he called him and said unto him, How is it that I hear this of thee? Give an account of thy stewardship; for thou mayest be no longer steward.** The three parables of the previous chapter had been addressed to the Pharisees and scribes, probably in the presence of the publicans and sinners, and surely in the presence of the disciples. The parable of the steward is spoken to the disciples, but the Pharisees were still present. Disciples includes not only the Twelve, but all the followers of Jesus. There is a hint even here. A certain man there was, and he was rich, so rich that he personally did not attend to the clerical work and to his finances, leaving all this to a steward and putting him in full charge, as trusted officer. But the steward was accused, an accusation was brought against him to the master, that he was wasting the goods entrusted to his care, that he was squandering his master's money, either by fraud or by extravagant living. The definiteness of the accusation caused the master to assume that the charge was true, and so he summoned the steward before him. He wanted him to give an account of himself and his work: What is this that I hear of thee? He orders him to produce his books, to render an account in detail of his stewardship before his position terminates. For if the books showed a discrepancy between the rents or debts that had been due in the past and the money that should be on hand, the loss of his position would naturally follow. There was still some chance for the steward, if he could prove or furnish apparent proofs of his innocence.

The deliberations with their result: V. 3. **Then the steward said within himself, What shall I do? For my lord taketh away from me the stewardship; I cannot dig; to beg I am ashamed.** V. 4. **I am resolved what to do, that, when I am put out of the stewardship, they may receive me into their houses.** V. 5. **So he called every one of his lord's debtors unto him, and said unto the first, How much owest thou unto my lord?** V. 6. **And he said, An hundred measures of oil. And he said unto him, Take thy bill, and sit down quickly, and write fifty.** V. 7. **Then said he to another, And how much owest thou? And he said, An hundred measures of wheat. And he said unto him, Take thy bill and write fourscore.** V. 8. **And the lord commended the unjust steward because he had done wisely; for the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light.** The unfaithful steward found himself in a very unpleasant situation, out of which only his wit could extricate him. Jesus reproduces the resulting monolog with realistic faithfulness. The steward was in a quandary, he was racking his brains for some way out of the difficulty. Dismissal under the circumstances meant degradation; no other master would give him a clerical position. He must be content, if he finds work at all, with such as involves little responsibility. His thoughts turn to farming, since his work had brought him into contact with agricultural labor; but he is physically not strong enough to dig, he could never stand that. The other alternative seems to be begging, and to do that he is ashamed. But finally he hits upon a scheme that ought to work. By means of it he hopes, even now yet, either to avert the threatened blow, or, in case he should not succeed in doing this, to provide for himself a comfortable old age. Should he lose his position and be degraded, the people whom he has in mind would be under obligations to take him into their houses. He carries his plan into execution at once. One after the other of his lord's debtors he summons to the office. Since he still had charge of the whole business, he

could easily do this. "These debtors might be farmers, who paid their rents in kind, or persons that had gotten supplies of goods from the master's stores." In each case, as he speaks to the individual debtor, he follows the same plan, although only two examples are given. At his direction, they changed or rewrote their bills of indebtedness, putting down a smaller amount than that which had been stipulated or which was due to the owner. One man owed a hundred measures, about seven hundred and fifty gallons, of oil. The amount was changed to read only one-half as much. Another owed one hundred measures, between seven and eight hundred bushels, of wheat. The amount was reduced to eighty. The object of the steward was to meet either contingency. If this scheme would prove successful, the shortage would no longer exist, for the income would appear to have been much smaller than the lord thought. Should the plan be found out, the bills of indebtedness would legally stand, and the debtors would show their gratitude by providing for him. It has even been suggested that the steward had falsified the amounts in the bills of indebtedness originally and pocketed the surplus, and was now returning to the original correct figures. At any rate, it was a clever scheme. Even the master, when he received information concerning this latest trick of the steward, could not withhold a certain commendation. He praised him, not on account of his unfaithfulness and his fraud, but on account of the cleverness in handling the situation and extricating himself out of an unpleasant predicament.

The application of the parable: V. 9. **And I say unto you, Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness, that, when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations.** V. 10. **He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much; and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much.** V. 11. **If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches?** V. 12. **And if ye have not been faithful in that which is another man's, who shall give you that which is your own?** The lesson of the parable has really begun in the previous section, and it may be that the entire judgment of verse 8 was spoken by Jesus. The children of this world, the people of the present day and age, are wiser than the children of light, the believers that have been enlightened by the Spirit of God, in their generation, toward their own kind; they exhibit much more keenness and business ability in their concerns than the children of the Church in theirs. They show their wisdom in relation to men of their own kind and in reference to worldly matters. It behooves the Christians to profit by their example and to show the same zeal, the same keenness, the same business ability in matters of the kingdom of God. One application of the lesson the Lord Himself makes with the emphasis peculiar to Him (as for Me, to you I say). The Christians should make for themselves friends by means of the mammon of unrighteousness. Mammon, a term found in several ancient languages, denotes money. Now, one evidence of the wisdom of the children of the world consists in this, that they make provision for the future, that they make all their business ventures serve this end. To put themselves and their families beyond care as soon as possible is their object, and therefore they make use of every possible advantage to attain to this end. The children of light, on the contrary, are often anything but energetic and diligent in the things that pertain to God's kingdom. They forget, also, that the end is coming, that they will have to give an account to the Lord in regard to their business transactions for Him. Therefore Jesus here admonishes them that they should so conduct their affairs, and principally those that concern temporal goods, wealth and money in general, that they, like the steward, shall make friends with the goods, with the mammon entrusted to them. Christians will use their money in the interest of the kingdom of God, in establishing and extending the Church of Jesus Christ throughout the world. And wherever they can, they will be actively interested in true charity in all its phases. In this way the poor congregations, the heathen, and others that receive the benefit of such investments, and the poor and suffering of the household of faith, will be under obligations to them. All these debtors will later show their true friendship in such a way that they will receive the Christians into the everlasting habitations. For the time will come that earthly wealth and mammon will fail; it is entrusted to every person only for the short space of this earthly life; and they themselves must leave this world behind. Then the wisdom of their investment will be demonstrated. For all those that have received any form of benefit from the money of the Christian brethren and sisters will then speak for them before the throne of God, testifying to the gifts which they enjoyed here in this world by the kindness of the members of the Church that were willing to share with the less fortunate in the possession of this world's goods. "All the good that we do to poor people here, the friendship and benefits which we show them, those works will on the last day not only be witnesses that we have conducted ourselves as brethren and Christians, but will also be rewarded and paid. Then some one will come and praise: Lord, this person gave me a coat, a dollar, a loaf of bread, a drink of water when I was in trouble." 86)

But Jesus draws other conclusions from the

86) Luther, quoted in Stoeckhardt, *Biblische Geschichte des Neuen Testaments*, 204.

parable. Faithfulness in small, apparently insignificant things is a criterion. It will follow that he who shows the right spirit, true faithfulness, in the less, will be faithful also in the greater, while the opposite holds true in the opposite case. Now, if a person does not prove faithful in the administration of the money which the Lord has entrusted to him for the short space of this earthly life, who will be foolish enough to entrust matters of real value and importance to such a one? The care and charge of spiritual gifts and goods presupposes the faithfulness in the less important temporal goods. Faith, which accepts and preserves the heavenly goods, all the gifts of God through the means of grace, will prove itself in the faithful discharge of earthly duties, in conscientious use of earthly goods, in mercy and beneficence. He that is not conscientious in the use of the money and goods entrusted to him gives evidence of lack of faith and of a contempt of heavenly goods. And if people are not faithful in the administration of the things that belong to another, who will be willing to give them such as are their actual property? People of wealth in this world are administrators, stewards of God's goods, which He has entrusted to them in the form of money or its equivalent. This involves responsibility, and the day of reckoning is coming. If God finds that such people could not even be trusted with strange property, He will conclude that they cannot be trusted either with the gifts of His grace, which are intended for their property for all eternity. All spiritual gifts, all that the heritage of heaven implies, are, unlike the temporal possessions, outright gifts. But the latter are given only to such persons as have given proof of their faith by works which proved that they could be trusted. The presence of faith is invariably shown by works of love.

A lesson concerning covetousness. V. 13. **No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will hold to the one and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.** V. 14. **And the Pharisees also, who were covetous, heard all these things; and they derided Him.** V. 15. **And He said unto them, Ye are they which justify yourselves before men; but God knoweth your hearts; for that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God.** V. 16. **The Law and the prophets were until John; since that time the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it.** V. 17. **And it is easier for heaven and earth to pass than one tittle of the Law to fail.** V. 18. **Whosoever putteth away his wife and marrieth another committeth adultery; and whosoever marrieth her that is put away from her husband committeth adultery.** It is impossible for a servant to be in the service of, and to render proper service to, two different masters. Cp. Matt. 6, 24. The one will have his affection and respect, and therefore the service which flows out of these feelings; the other will have his dislike, if not his outright hatred. And so he cannot serve the interests of both. If any one serves mammon, attaches his heart to his money, to his wealth, if he has only the object of satisfying his own desires, he cannot at the same time serve the Lord. His heart will be where his supposed treasure is. This last saying angered the Pharisees, who were present and had heard the parable. They were lovers of money, they were covetous. And since they felt the sting of the words, they tried to turn the tables on the Lord, in a childish way, by turning up their noses at Him, by sneering and deriding Him. This behavior of the Pharisees causes Jesus to flay their self-righteousness, and to remind them of some other shortcomings and vices which were found in their midst. They justified themselves before men, they lived their lives so as to conform with the outward forms of holiness before men, who could not look into their hearts to discover the hidden meanness. But God looked beyond the veneer of outward righteousness, He knew their hearts in all their filthiness. Before men they may be highly respected, but before the Lord they and their entire behavior were an abomination. And it is true in general that conventional moral statements are the opposite of real truth; the hypocrisies of the so-called high society in many cases are such as to make the behavior of the lowest class of people that are sincere in speech and action seem golden by contrast. But even here the searching mercy of the Lord is apparent. For He tells the Pharisees that the Law and the Prophets were in power until John, who stands on the threshold between the Old and the New Testaments. But beginning with John, and since his coming, the glorious preaching of the kingdom of God, as revealed in Jesus the Christ, had gone forth, and every one that became interested at all was so completely overcome with the glories revealed that he pressed forward with might and took it by force. Cp. Matt. 11, 12. 13. The believer is obliged to battle with, and to overcome, all his own natural desires and lusts, and to deny the world with all its gifts and allurements in order to enter into the Kingdom. But this does not imply that the Law has been abrogated. The situation rather is this, that it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away, — and heaven and earth will actually be destroyed, — before so much as one tittle, a single diacritical mark of the Hebrew script, falls to the ground. Cp. Matt. 5, 17. 18. 32. Therefore also the Seventh Commandment with its judgment upon covetousness would continue in force. And no less should the Pharisees remember the Sixth Commandment, concerning which there was far too much license in their midst. What Jesus had said at other times He here repeated with emphasis. The wanton dissolution of the mar-

riage-tie by which a man put away his wife for almost any reason that he chose to name, simply by giving her a bill of divorcement, and then entered into a union with some other woman, is adultery before God. And the union with a woman that has been thus put away by her husband without a cause that God acknowledges is again adultery. God will not be mocked with the lax marriage and divorce of these latter days. The state may, for the sake of expediency, permit many things to the children of the world which God condemns unequivocally; but that fact does not and cannot influence a Christian nor cause him to deviate one inch from the will of God as revealed in the Law.

The Rich Man and Lazarus, the Beggar.

Luke 16, 19—31.

A contrast in fortunes: V. 19. **There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day;** v. 20. **and there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate full of sores,** v. 21. **and desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table; moreover, the dogs came and licked his sores.** Although, for the lesson of this story, it is immaterial whether it is a parable or the account of an actual happening, as Luther remarks, yet the manner of presentation points to the correctness of the latter assumption. The connection between this narrative and the previous conversation is evident. The servants of mammon, by their misuse of the gifts of God, by their misapplication of the funds entrusted to them, earn for themselves the tortures of damnation. The vivid contrast which runs through the entire description should be noted: A certain rich man that made it a habit to appear always in dresses of the most expensive kind, purple and silky linen, that lived splendidly and yielded himself fully to the delights of feasting every day; on the other hand, a poor man, whose name, Lazarus (trust in God), has been preserved, living in the squalor of the utmost poverty, lying at the entrance gate of the rich man's estate, with his ragged clothes insufficient for covering the ulcers which had broken out on his body due to unhealthy conditions of living and improper food, satisfied with, and eager for, the scraps which were thrown out from the table of the rich man. The dogs were more merciful than the men that saw him in his misery, for they at least came and licked his ulcers. The one lived only for himself and for the delights and luxuries of the body. He may have seen the beggar whom some one had deposited at his door, as he went in and out, or as he rode by in his fine carriage, but he paid no attention to him nor to his condition. Unpleasant facts interfere with the enjoyment of life. "If we look at this rich man according to the fruits of faith, we find a heart and a tree of unbelief. For the Gospel rebukes him that he daily fared sumptuously and dressed splendidly, all of which reason does not regard an unusually great sin. . . . But this rich man is not reproved because he had fine food and splendid clothes, for many saints, kings, and queens formerly wore fine dresses, as Solomon, Esther, David, Daniel, and others; but because he set his heart upon it, he sought, he clung to it, he chose it, he had all his joy, desire, and pleasure in it, and made it his idol." 87)

Another contrast: V. 22. **And it came to pass that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom; the rich man also died, and was buried;** v. 23. **and in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom.** V. 24. **And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.** V. 25. **But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented.** V. 26. **And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed, so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us that would come from thence.** Here the fortunes are reversed with a vengeance: the servant of God in bliss, the servant of mammon in misery. The beggar died, he finally succumbed to the combination of sickness and starvation. But his death provoked an embassy from heaven: he was carried up by the angels into the bosom of Abraham. Note: So inexpressibly wonderful is the bliss of heaven that human language cannot, even remotely, describe its glories; and therefore this circumscription is used, the bosom of Abraham, as the father of all the faithful. He that had not had a friend in the wide world, whom people refused so much as to touch, now was joyfully received into the eternal home and found a place of honor by the side of Abraham, leaning against his bosom, as the beloved disciple leaned against the bosom of Jesus. But the account of the death and funeral of the rich man is extremely bare and meager: he died and was buried. Such is the valuation which God places upon the life of him that wasted his substance in service of self; that was God's obituary. But the sequel? In hell, where his soul found itself, the former rich man found himself in tortures, in inexpressible agony, as great, by contrast, as was the bliss of Lazarus whom he could see. In his pain and misery he called out for relief, asking Abraham to have pity upon him and dispatch Lazarus with only so much as a single drop of water on the tip

87) Luther, 11, 1196.

of his finger, to quench the burning, feverish thirst which was consuming the pampered soul. Just a little cooling he longed, he pleaded for, on account of the flame which was affecting him with the severest pains. Note: Now the rich man could and did notice Lazarus, now he could plead for a favor from the hands of him whom his dainty fingers refused to touch in life. But the pathetic request is refused. Son, indeed, Abraham calls him, for such he is after the flesh, and upon that carnal relationship he had depended; but there is no relationship of spirit between them. He should remember that he had received that which he had wanted, the good things of life, while he was still alive and in the world. He had served mammon, and mammon had rewarded him after his own manner. Now the position of Lazarus and the rich man were reversed: the former received comfort, the latter torture. There was absolute justice in the situation. And even if Abraham had been willing to listen to the pleading of the poor wretch in hell, there was no possibility of fufilling his request, since there was a deep chasm, an unbridgeable abyss, between the place of the blessed and that of the damned, firmly fixed, excluding all possibility of intercourse. So, though he that never showed pity now asks pity; though he that never practised humility now humbly pleads, there is no chance, his last hope is gone.

Hearing Moses and the Prophets: V. 27. **Then he said, I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father's house;** v. 28. **for I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment.** V. 29. **Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them.** V. 30. **And he said, Nay, Father Abraham; but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent.** V. 31. **And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead.** A strange change has come upon the former rich man. Formerly he cared only for himself and the gratification of his own desires, but now, when it is too late, he remembers duties and kindnesses which he should formerly have shown to his relatives. The repentance of the damned in hell may be sincere and comprehensive a thousand times over, but then it is too late! A second petition the poor wretch sends across the chasm. He wants Lazarus sent back, as a spirit from the land of death, to warn his five brothers, lest they share his own awful fate. Where faith and belief have been thrown out, unbelief and superstition are rife and rampant. When the Word of God in Law and Gospel has been declared insufficient for the would-be enlightenment of a twentieth century, there spiritualism, real and imitated, is hailed as a solution and salvation. Abraham therefore gives him a bit of much-needed information. The old sound doctrine, the written Word of God, is the one and only safe norm and rule of doctrine and life. Moses and the Prophets were accessible to the brothers, they were read in all the synagogs on the Sabbath-day; let the brothers seek for the truth there, nothing more would be needed. If the brothers at that time, if the people of our time, will not heed Moses and the Prophets, if they will not obey the Word and heed its lessons and warnings, as well as its admonitions and promises, then there is no more hope. The Word is a lamp unto the feet of every searcher of truth, Ps. 119, 105. Note: Hell is not a figment of a diseased imagination, but hell is real! Its torments are terrible: A consuming and yet never destroying flame; thirst that cannot be alleviated by so much as a tiny drop of water; the ability to see the bliss of the saints in heaven, but no possibility of ever becoming partakers of that happiness; no deliverance or salvation from hell's tortures, — all hope forever gone.

Summary. *Jesus tells the parable of the unjust steward and adds several lessons for the disciples and for the Pharisees, and relates the story of the rich man and of Lazarus, the beggar.*

CHAPTER 17.

A Lesson on Offenses and Forgiveness.

Luke 17, 1—10.

On offenses: V. 1. **Then said He unto the disciples, It is impossible but that offenses will come; but woe unto him through whom they come!** V. 2. **It were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck and he cast into the sea than that he should offend one of these little ones.** In this chapter we have a number of lessons which were given, and incidents which took place, during the last journey of the Lord to Jerusalem. He did not take the direct route, but traveled back and forth in Southern Galilee and into Samaria, as occasion offered. The Pharisees had been reproved and silenced once more, and Jesus had leisure to teach His disciples without interference. Cp. Matt. 18, 6. 7. It is not possible, Jesus says, for offenses not to come. The imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth, and all the evil thoughts that take their rise in the heart come forth and show themselves in evil deeds, unless a person is on the watch all the time to subdue every sinful movement. But the majority of people in the world have no interest in doing this. So long as they do not come into conflict with the law of the state, they live and act pretty well as they choose. And the result is

that occasions for stumbling are given. Things are done continually in the world at which the sincere disciples of Christ take justifiable offense, since they are dishonorable to the Lord and harmful to the Church. To these offenses belong all the deliberate and unpremeditated blasphemies of the Lord and His Word, the many transgressions of the Sixth Commandment in word, dress, picture, and deed, and other sins. The fact, however, that offenses are inevitable does not excuse the offender nor condone his sin, but the Lord pronounces a woe upon him. It would be a more fortunate end for such a one, it would be more to his advantage, if a millstone were placed about his neck, one of the two small millstones such as were in use for grinding in the houses, and that he were thrown out into the sea. This fate would be preferable to the other, by which the sinner that has offended would be condemned into the deepest abyss of hell. For the offense against one of the little ones of the Lord, against the children and the simple believers in the Scripture and its truths, belongs to the transgressions of the first rank. If the children of the world were at all conscious of the guilt and the damnation they load upon themselves by the many methods which they have devised for tripping the feet of the unwary, they would probably be more careful with the opportunities for sin in both the gross and fine forms which they are holding out on all sides, in theaters, dance-halls, pool-rooms, saloons, through suggestive pictures and stories, and in thousands of other forms.

Concerning forgiveness: V. 3. **Take heed to yourselves: If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him.** V. 4. **And if he trespass against thee seven times a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent, thou shalt forgive him.** V. 5. **And the apostles said unto the Lord, Increase our faith.** V. 6. **And the Lord said, If ye had faith as a grain of mustard-seed, ye might say unto this sycamine tree, Be thou plucked up by the root, and be thou planted in the sea, and it should obey you.** The children of the world make it a point literally to scandalize, give offense with deliberate intent to hurt and to lead into sin. But among Christians it also happens, and frequently, that one brother offends the other, grieves him by some unpremeditated sin or in a moment of weakness. For that reason they should take heed, they should be on the lookout as regards themselves all the time, lest they themselves become guilty and scandalize a brother. And if a brother offends in any respect, the Christian that knows of the sin should earnestly admonish him, Matt. 18, 21. 22. As soon as the brother thereupon repents of his sin, the Christian should forgive him, fully and freely, even though the same process be repeated seven times a day. The heart of the believers should partake of the nature of God's and Christ's, or God's in Christ, which knows neither end nor limit. Whenever the confession comes: I am sorry, then should the assurance be given in return that the matter is forgiven. Such a measure of love for the erring brother, it is true, requires an unusual amount of love, and therefore a corresponding amount of faith. The apostles were conscious of that fact; as matters stood then, they hardly believed themselves equal to the task proposed by Christ. And so, after mulling over the admonition for a while, they put the request to Him to add to their faith. This prayer is necessary for every Christian every day, if he wants his love to keep pace with the many demands that are placed upon it. Faith must grow at the same rate as love. A Christian will search ever more diligently, he will plunge ever more deeply into the depths of the love of God in Jesus the Savior. Only in that way will he be able to practise the forgiveness toward his brother which is demanded by the discipleship of Christ. The Lord took the occasion to enlarge upon one of His favorite topics, that of the strength of faith. If they had faith only as large as the seed of a mustard-plant or -tree, they would have the power to say to the fig mulberry or sycamore fig-tree standing before them that it should tear itself out by the roots and plant itself in the sea, and it would obey without question. Note: To grow in faith, in the power of faith, must be the earnest ambition of every Christian. Sincere prayer to the Lord, unwavering trust in His promises, a constant contemplation of His Word: those are the methods by which growth in faith may be accomplished.

No merit in works: V. 7. **But which of you, having a servant plowing or feeding cattle, will say unto him by and by when he is come from the field, Go and sit down to meat;** v. 8. **and will not rather say unto him, Make ready wherewith I may sup, and gird thyself, and serve me, till I have eaten and drunken, and afterward thou shalt eat and drink?** V. 9. **Doth he thank that servant because he did the things that were commanded him? I trow not.** V. 10. **So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants; we have done that which was our duty to do.** Since faith, according to the Lord's own explanation, shows itself in good works, in deeds of mercy and forgiveness and other miraculous acts such as are impossible without faith, the thought might have arisen in the hearts of the disciples that works were therefore meritorious, that they earned something in the sight of God. But this thought the Lord precludes by a parabolic narrative, a parallel with strong application. "Christ's purpose is not to teach in what spirit God deals with His servants, but to teach rather in what

spirit we should serve God." If a master has a slave that has been plowing or doing the work of a herder out in the field, and this servant comes home in the evening, he will not say to him: Go at once and get your supper. The master will continue to require the services of the slave, bidding him first prepare the supper for the master, then gird up his clothes about him and wait at the table. After the lord of the house has eaten and drunken, then the slave may also have his supper. The master would not think of thanking the slave for the work he has thus performed, for the service was taken as a matter of course; it was all in the day's work. The picture is not too harsh or overdrawn, but is taken from conditions which were usual in the time of Christ throughout the Roman Empire. Now the Lord makes the application, saying that even so all believers, when they have done all that they were commanded to do, which includes all the demands which grow out of all situations confronting men at all times, when they have done their full duty (if that were possible), yet they will have nothing to boast of, nothing for which they could demand anything of God in return. They are still unprofitable servants; they have but done that which was expected of them as their duty. There is no merit or worthiness before God in them even then. If God looks upon the good works of the Christians with a kindly countenance and praises and rewards them, that is not a matter of merit, but of free grace. All the greater is our obligation of love.

The Ten Lepers. Luke 17, 11—19.

The cleansing: V. 11. **And it came to pass, as He went to Jerusalem, that He passed through the midst of Samaria and Galilee.** V. 12. **And as He entered into a certain village, there met Him ten men that were lepers, which stood afar off;** v. 13. **and they lifted up their voices, and said, Jesus, Master, have mercy on us.** V. 14. **And when He saw them, He said unto them, Go show yourselves unto the priests. And it came to pass that, as they went, they were cleansed.** Jesus did not travel to Jerusalem by the shortest route, but journeyed by easy stages along the boundary between Galilee and Samaria, now in the one, then again in the other province, as occasion offered, and He found villages which had not yet heard the Gospel of the Kingdom. Now when He was about to enter into a village in that region, ten leprous men came out to meet Him. Observing the strict rule concerning infection, they did not come all the way to Christ, but stood at some distance, near enough, however, that their hoarse voice might be heard. And they called in unison, to increase the carrying power of their prayer: Jesus, Lord, have mercy on us! That was a prayer of faith. They knew Jesus through the medium of the wonderful stories that had been told about Him. The message concerning Christ had worked faith in their hearts. Their plea for mercy was an expression of this faith. "This is testified to by their words, when they say: Have mercy on us! He that seeks mercy will surely not buy and barter it, but seeks only grace and mercy, as one that is unworthy of it and most assuredly merits something entirely different." 88) And Jesus, seeing them, and fully aware of their miserable plight, ordered them to show themselves to the priests. It was commanded in the Law of Moses that such persons as supposed themselves to be cured of the dreadful disease of leprosy or had actually been cured, must present themselves to one of the priests on duty at the sanctuary, in order that their condition might be established. For if they had been cured of their sickness, they were required to bring certain prescribed sacrifices connected with their cleansing, Lev. 13, 2; 14, 2. Jesus did not heal the sick men outright, in order not to arouse the opposition of the priests unduly, for they would have had the power, if they so chose for enmity toward Him, to declare that the men were still leprous. Jesus combined tact and discretion with kindness and mercy. Therefore it happened that the men became clean after they had left His presence, while on their way to the sanctuary. Mark that their going, in these circumstances, was an act of faith. Without seeing the miracle, they believed that it would happen to them. And so it came about.

The grateful Samaritan: V. 15. **And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, and with a loud voice glorified God,** v. 16. **and fell down on his face at His feet, giving Him thanks; and he was a Samaritan.** V. 17. **And Jesus, answering, said, Were there not ten cleansed? But where are the nine?** V. 18. **There are not found that returned to give glory to God save this stranger.** V. 19. **And He said unto him, Arise, go thy way; thy faith hath made thee whole.** Ten lepers had shown faith; ten lepers had been healed. But out of that entire number only one felt the obligation of thankfulness. Only one, seeing what a miracle had been done in his case, felt the need of turning back and giving thanks to the Healer. This man sought the Lord, who was probably still in the village, meanwhile praising God loudly and with fully restored voice. And when he found Jesus, he fell down on his face before Him, at His feet, in complete surrender, signifying his willingness to be the Lord's servant forever. And all the while his mouth poured forth words of thankfulness. And yet this man, who thus put to shame his former companions in misery, was a Samaritan, a member of the race which was despised by the Jews and Galileans. The incident made a deep impression upon Jesus. In a bitter cry

88) Luther, 11, 1579.

over the ingratitude of the former lepers He said: Is it not that ten were cleansed? But the nine, where are they? Were there not found such as would turn back to give glory to God but only this stranger, this man of a different race, and one that is ordinarily looked down upon by the Jews? "That is the true worship of God, to come back, to praise God with a loud voice. That is the greatest work in heaven and earth, and also the only one which we may show God; for of the others He has no need, neither does He receive them: only to be loved and praised by us, that He likes. . . . But that is terrible, that the Lord just knows that ten have been cleansed, a fact they had not reckoned with; and He does not hold His peace about it, but asks for them and seeks them: Where are the nine? O what a terror that will be when at that time they will feel the question and have to answer where they went when they did not give honor to God! . . . We have all vowed in Baptism to follow Christ and His doctrine; no one has vowed to follow the Pope, bishops, and clerics. Thus Christ has altogether rejected and prohibited the doctrine of men." 89) This question is a very important and serious one for all Christians. The gifts of God which we have received from Him through the means of grace during our whole life amount to far more than a cleansing from bodily leprosy. We have received, and are continually receiving, the riches of God's unmerited love and mercy Sunday after Sunday, day by day. And yet we are very dilatory about the gratitude which we owe to Him in thoughts, words, and deeds. The Lord will think kindly of us for any show of appreciation, as He showed in this instance. For He dismissed the Samaritan with the words: Arise, go thy way; thy faith has healed and saved thee. Jesus does not refer to the faith of the others, which had been extinguished in the midst of their newly found happiness. He praises only the faith of him that remained faithful. Those who forget His kindness He also forgets. Many a person has come to faith, had the beginning of faith in his heart, learned to pray in trouble, to trust in God for help; but later the same person, by base ingratitude, has suffocated the young plant of spiritual life. Faith for a time, followed by backsliding, results in the loss of faith and also of the mercy of God. Only lasting, grateful faith will provide lasting help and will save a person in body and soul.

Concerning the Kingdom of God and the Coming of Christ. Luke 17, 20—37.

Of the coming of the kingdom: V. 20. **And when He was demanded of the Pharisees when the kingdom of God should come, He answered them and said, The kingdom of God cometh not with observation;** v. 21. **neither shall they say, Lo here! or, Lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you.** V. 22. **And He said unto the disciples, The days will come when ye shall desire to see one of the days of the Son of Man, and ye shall not see it.** V. 23. **And they shall say to you, See here; or, See there; go not after them, nor follow them.** V. 24. **For as the lightning that lighteneth out of the one part under heaven shineth unto the other part under heaven, so shall also the Son of Man be in His day.** V. 25. **But first must He suffer many things, and be rejected of this generation.** The resentful, peevish attitude of the Pharisees came to the front with increasing frequency. Here Jesus was approached by them with a question which was intended to make Him an object of ridicule. His continual reference to the coming of the Kingdom provoked the question. The Pharisees wanted to know when the kingdom of God would come. They wanted to know the time, they wanted visible evidence. For their idea of the kingdom of Christ or of the Messiah was that of the modern millennialists, of a visible kingdom, a physical entity, brought into being by a political or social revolution and upheaval. But Jesus corrected their foolish ideas, telling them that the kingdom of God does not come with observation, in a way or mode that every one can see and measure it. It cannot be observed with the eye, it is not a vulgar, physical, visible body or realm. To attempt to fix its definite position, its limits, its boundaries in the world by the application of the senses, by sight, is foolish; for the kingdom of God is within, in the hearts of the believers. He that accepts the mercy of the King of grace is a member of the Kingdom of Grace, but by faith only, which is in the heart and cannot be seen by human beings. And all external signs of the presence of the Kingdom and its power in the hearts of the believers are not infallible, since these same signs may be feigned by such as are hypocrites. Upon this spiritual, invisible Kingdom the thoughts and minds of men should be set. Only he that is a member of the Kingdom of Grace here will be a member of the Kingdom of Glory up yonder.

The disciples themselves were not at all clear in this matter, they were still battling with carnal ideas as to the kingdom of the Messiah, and therefore the Lord gives them a few signs of the deceiver's methods. For it was the Lord's constant custom to support and comfort the minds of His disciples. Days will come when they would desire and wish for only one day of the revelation of the perfect glory of heaven, when just one day's experience of the bliss to be would give them new strength to bear the trials and persecutions of the world. But the final revelation will not come until the day fixed by the decree of God. Then there will be false prophets and false Christs who will point and say: Lo, here is Christ; lo, there!

89) Luther, 11, 1603. 1609.

Cp. Matt. 24, 23; Mark 13, 21. The believers must not permit themselves to be deceived by such talk, for it will be a temptation, a delusion, and a snare. As for Christ, His final advent will partake of the nature of the lightning. In one moment He will shine, with all the glory of His splendor, from this quarter under heaven unto that; He will be visible to all people of the earth. But before this glorious consummation there will be a long time of waiting and watching for the believers, with a sore trial for their patience. First of all the great obligation rests upon the Lord to suffer in the great Passion, to be rejected by the present generation. Christ must bear His cross first, and His Church, the members of His kingdom, will become partakers of this suffering, before the great day of glory dawns.

The suddenness of Christ's advent: V. 26. **And as it was in the days of Noe, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of Man.** V. 27. **They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and the Flood came, and destroyed them all.** V. 28. **Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded;** v. 29. **but the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all.** V. 30. **Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of Man is revealed.** The distinguishing characteristic of the time just preceding the final advent of Christ, the Son of Man, will be an indifferent carelessness. The days of Noah are an example. The warning had gone out through the mouth of this preacher of righteousness that the people should repent of their foolish ways. But they gave so little heed to the warning that they continued in all the manner of complete abandon in the desires of the flesh up to the very hour of the cataclysm: they ate, they drank, they married, they were married; men and women, the entire generation, past all hope of redemption. And then, with the sudden frightfulness that has characterized the judgments of God in similar situations, came the day on which Noah entered into the ark; then came the Flood and destroyed them all. And the days of Lot are another example of the utter, blind heedlessness of the people. In Sodom and Gomorrah the inhabitants continued in the delights of the flesh as well as in all their lines of business, work, and endeavor: they ate, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they built, up to the very hour of the catastrophe that overwhelmed the cities, when it rained fire and sulphur from heaven and destroyed them all. The people of the last times will not have learned their lesson from the previous calamities; when the Son of Man will be revealed before their astonished, horrified eyes on the last day, He will find them as unprepared for His coming, as deeply steeped in the foolishness of the Noachites and of the Sodomites as any generation ever was.

Final warnings: V. 31. **In that day, he which shall be upon the housetop, and his stuff in the house, let him not come down to take it away; and he that is in the field, let him likewise not return back.** V. 32. **Remember Lot's wife.** V. 33. **Whosoever shall seek to save his life shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his life shall preserve it.** V. 34. **I tell you, in that night there shall be two men in one bed; the one shall be taken, and the other shall be left.** V. 35. **Two women shall be grinding together; the one shall be taken, and the other left.** V. 36. **Two men shall be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left.** V. 37. **And they answered and said unto Him, Where, Lord? And He said unto them, Wheresoever the body is, thither will the eagles be gathered together.** The thought which stands out from the Lord's warning is this, that it will be too late to prepare for the Lord's coming when His hour has come, when the Judgment bursts upon the world. The suddenness of the breaking of Judgment Day will take every person where he just happens to be at that time. A man will be up on the flat roof of the house. He will neither have, nor should he attempt to take, time to go down and get any instruments or possessions. A man will be out in the field. He also should not turn back behind him for anything of this world's goods that he may have valued. As when an army of the enemy makes a sudden successful assault and only precipitate flight will save the inhabitants, he that turns back for money, clothes, or other goods is lost, so the person whose mind is still attached to the things of this world on the last day is beyond hope of salvation. The example of Lot's wife should be before the minds of the believers at all times. Had she not turned behind her to satisfy her curiosity, she might have saved her soul with the rest. Her hesitation proved her destruction. Cp. Matt. 16, 25; Mark 8, 35; Luke 9, 24. He that in the last emergency will have nothing in mind but the saving of this earthly life and the goods that are necessary for its preservation, will lose forever the true life in and with God; but he whose desires are free from all love for this world and what it has to offer, that has denied himself and all that this life might have given him, he will save his life, the life in God, his soul and its eternal salvation. Christ repeats this warning once more, with great emphasis. In that same night two men will be occupying the same bed, of whom one will be accepted and the other rejected. Two women will be grinding flour at the same mill; one will be accepted, the other will be rejected. Two men will be in the field; the one will be accepted, the other will be rejected. And the emphasis of the Lord was not without its effect upon the

disciples. In awe and fear, they barely breathe the question: Where, Lord? Where will all this happen? And He told them: Where the dead body is, there will the eagles gather themselves together. The world, especially in the last days, will be, and to-day is, like a decaying carcass, whose stench rises up into the heavens. And judgment and destruction will come upon the entire spiritually dead and morally rotten human race. It is a strong, but fitting figure, revealing the world as it is, in its true condition, without a redeeming feature to recommend it in the sight of God.

Summary. *Christ gives a lesson concerning offenses and forgiveness, heals the ten lepers, receiving the thanks of one, and gives a discourse concerning the kingdom of God and the coming to Judgment.*

CHAPTER 18.

The Importunate Widow. Luke 18, 1—8.

The unjust judge: V. 1. **And He spake a parable unto them to this end that men ought always to pray and not to faint,** v. 2. **saying, There was in a city a judge which feared not God, neither regarded man.** V. 3. **And there was a widow in that city; and she came unto him, saying, Avenge me of mine adversary.** V. 4. **And he would not for a while; but afterward he said within himself, Though I fear not God nor regard man,** v. 5. **yet, because this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me.** The revelations of Jesus concerning the last days of the world and His coming to Judgment would naturally fill the disciples with consternation and apprehension. It was evident that, with such afflictions and desolations coming upon the land, they would have need of much patience and continual fortitude, but also of the constant protection of God. To be instant and importunate in prayer, therefore, would be a necessity of the last days for such as intended to heed the warnings of the Master. The story was to teach the disciples the obligation always to pray, to be persistent and persevering in prayer, in spite of all temptation to unbelief, notwithstanding all delay on the part of God. Not to grow weary, not to be overwhelmed by fatigue, that is the secret of the conquering prayer. For the point of the story is not that God does not delay in answering prayer. This fact is only too well known from the experience of many Christians. But the cause, reason, or motive for delay in the case of God is entirely different from that of the judge. The judge represents God only in so far as the Lord often appears to a sorely tried heart as a hard and unreasonable Master, otherwise there is no similarity.

A judge was in a certain city. According to Deut. 16, 18, the Jews were to have, in all the gates of the city, judges, whose work consisted in hearing cases and pronouncing judgment. They were supposed to administer justice without respect of persons, Ex. 23, 6—9; Lev. 19, 15; Matt. 5, 21. 22. But the judge here spoken of feared not God, he paid no attention to the calls of justice; and he had no respect for man, he was unmoved even by such complaints as required immediate adjustment. An utterly unprincipled man, controlled by shameless selfishness. Now there was a widow in the same city that had been defrauded, that had suffered an injustice, and she naturally brought her complaint to the official whose business it was to adjudicate matters of that kind. Her cry was: Vindicate me from my adversary, see to it that I get justice, provide a square deal for me. She continued to come again and again, and she became more insistent as time went by. For a considerable time he stood it, for he had no inclination to exert himself, since he was living for his own ease only. But finally he thought the matter out within himself. Though he had no fear of God in his heart and no respect for men in his mind, yet his selfishness thought very highly of his own comfort and peace of mind. To escape the bother which she was making for him, to spare himself disagreeable hours, since she was rendering life miserable for him, he wanted to secure justice for her, lest she at last, in the height of bitterness and rage, literally put her fists into his eyes, punish him, in the language of the prize-ring.[90] The condition of his heart was not changed in a single particle, but he disliked being bored to distraction.

The moral of the story: V. 6. **And the Lord said, Hear what the unjust judge saith.** V. 7. **And shall not God avenge His own elect, which cry day and night unto Him, though He bear long with them?** V. 8. **I tell you that He will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man cometh, shall He find faith on the earth?** The Lord Himself, in pointing out the lesson, brings out the contrast strongly: on the one hand, the judge of unrighteousness, whose ideas of justice were not only hazy, but who knew no justice, whose character was the essence of selfishness; on the other, the just and loving God, whose aim is not only to do justice, but to show mercy to all His works; the one yielding grudgingly and merely to escape being bored; the other finding His delight in showing mercy and in yielding to the entreaties of His own. Truly, God will provide vindication for His elect, for those that believe on Him through

90) Cobern, *The New Archeological Discoveries*, 120.

the power of His means of grace. But He wants them to continue in prayer, in calling to Him, day and night. He may be leisurely in coming to the help of His saints, He may delay His help for a while; but when His hour comes, the succor which He renders comes suddenly. It is a speedy and glorious deliverance which they experience. The question of God's hearing prayer is therefore beyond doubt, but the certainty of faith in the case of the people on earth is not so absolute. With all the temptations of the last days surrounding them, it will be a very serious question, from the standpoint of men, whether faith in Jesus Christ as the Messiah of the world will still be found at that time. It will surely be a matter of God's power and mercy to keep His elect in the faith until the end.

The Pharisee and the Publican.

Luke 18, 9—14.

The Pharisee: V. 9. **And He spake this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous and despised others:** v. 10. **Two men went up into the Temple to pray, the one a Pharisee and the other a publican.** V. 11. **The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank Thee that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican.** V. 12. **I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess.** During the last journey of Jesus, representatives of the Pharisees were present almost continually. It is probable that some of these had given some evidence of their imagined superiority again, or there were others that had their way of thinking and acting. They trusted in themselves that they were righteous; they firmly believed themselves to be perfect; they felt only the deepest contempt for the others whom they supposed to be in a class far beneath them, below the consideration of all decent people. They were representatives of the self-righteous, self-sufficient people, with both inherent and carefully educated Pharisaic tendencies. The parable of Jesus was intended to open the eyes of this pitifully blind class. Two men went up into the Temple to pray. The third, sixth, and ninth hours of the day were observed by the Jews as the hours of prayer, Dan. 6, 10. If possible, they went up into the Temple for that special prayer, or turned toward the Temple in making it. The chief places of prayer were the halls, or porches, or the inner courts, where there was little or no distraction or disturbance. The first of these two men was a Pharisee, a member of the strictest sect among the Jews. He stood, he made it his object to be as prominent and conspicuous as possible, for he felt his self-importance and intended to convey to others this same impression. He prayed to himself, literally: his words were more in the nature of congratulation and praise of himself than a communication to God. What he said was the firm conviction of his own heart. He proudly enumerated his supposed virtues, thanking God, incidentally, that he was not like other people. The poor man did not know, in the arrogance of his pride, that he might do whatever he chose, "yea, if he sweat blood and had himself burned with fire, it would still before God be an abomination and the greatest of sins." 91) The Pharisee boasted that he had done no harm to others; he was no extortioner, no robber that openly took his neighbor's property; he was no unjust person, he paid his debts and gave to every man his due; he was no adulterer, he had never openly lived in sins of the flesh; he was not on a level with the publican, whose many transgressions were proverbial. But he also had positive virtues; he observed all the ordinances of religion, both those commanded by God and those enjoined by the elders. Only one day in the year had been set aside by God as a day of fasting for the entire people, the great Day of Atonement. But the Pharisees of the stricter kind added voluntary fasts on Mondays and Thursdays; the latter, because on that day Moses was said to have ascended on Mount Sinai; the former, because they believed he had come down on that day from the mountain. This Pharisee was also very strict about giving tithes, the tenth part of all that he possessed, down to the smallest vegetable in the garden, Matt. 23, 23. The Pharisee is a type of all self-righteous people of all times, of every person that has pleasure and delight in himself, in his own wonderful being and doing, that boasts before God of his civic honesty and blameless reputation, of some outward, glittering virtues, and despises others.

The publican: V. 13. **And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me, a sinner!** V. 14. **I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.** The publican had nothing of the arrogance and self-assertiveness of the Pharisee. He stood at a great distance, probably in the shadow of a pillar, where he would be as inconspicuous as possible. He is acutely conscious of his unworthiness. He does not even dare to lift up his eyes toward the sanctuary as to the visible shrine of God's presence among His people. He can only, in piercing grief because of his sin, beat upon his breast. His prayer is one shuddering sigh: God, be merciful to me, the sinner! In his eyes there is only one sinner worth mentioning, only one whose sins he can see; and that is himself. Cp. 1 Tim. 1, 15. He knows of no merit, no worthiness, on his part; he has nothing to boast of. It is only shame, bound-

91) Luther, 13b, 2310.

less, overwhelming shame, that he feels. And he asks only for mercy, nothing but God's grace. The publican is a type of the repentant sinner, that knows and acknowledges his sin, that feels its guilt in heart and conscience, that confesses his guilt over against God, but also turns to the Lord as to his merciful, gracious God, accepts and appropriates the grace of God, the pardon which is assured to all sinners in Jesus, the Savior. The judgment of Christ in the case is clear and comprehensive. With emphasis He declares that this man, the publican, went down into his house justified, pardoned rather than the other, the Pharisee. He received the atonement of Jesus in faith in the Messiah. He was justified by grace, for Christ's sake, through faith. "There we hear two strange and peculiar sentences, altogether opposed to human wisdom and imagination of reason, terrible in the eyes of all the world, that the great saints are condemned as unrighteous and the poor sinners are accepted and declared to be righteous and holy." 92) All the great saints after the manner of the Pharisees are in actual fact unrighteous; their worship, praying, praise is nothing but hypocrisy and boasting; they are not honest toward God and men, and, what is still worse, they have no prayer to God, ask nothing of God, want nothing of God's love and mercy. And therefore they remain in their sins and are looked upon by God as unjust and treated accordingly. The poor sinners, on the other hand, that acknowledge their sinfulness and desire nothing but mercy, they receive the mercy for which they long. For every one that exalts himself will be humiliated; but he that humbles himself will be exalted. He that believes himself to be pious and righteous, that exalts himself above all sinfulness and above all sinners, will close the door of mercy before his own face, will bring upon himself damnation. But he that confesses his condition as that of a lost and condemned creature, and puts his sole and only trust in the grace of God, will be accepted by God as His dear child in Jesus the Savior.

Christ Blesses Little Children.

Luke 18, 15—17.

V. 15. **And they brought unto Him also infants that He would touch them; but when His disciples saw it, they rebuked them.** V. 16. **But Jesus called them unto Him and said, Suffer little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not; for of such is the kingdom of God.** V. 17. **Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child shall in no wise enter therein.** The incident here told happened in one of the hamlets, probably in Perea, while Jesus was on His last journey to Jerusalem. The kindness of Jesus won the hearts of all that were not filled with prejudice against Him. And therefore the mothers of the village brought their little children, their babies, to Jesus, in order that He might lay His hands upon them in blessing. There was nothing of superstition in this act. But the disciples, as soon as they noticed this proceeding, gravely rebuked the mothers for disturbing the Master, who in their opinion was far too busy and engaged with far too weighty questions to be disturbed with trifles. But the view of Jesus in this matter differed from that of His disciples very decidedly. In a manner which carried a world of reproof for their interference, He called out to the mothers, bidding them come. He was glad and wanted the little children brought to Him. No one should in any way interfere with such bringing nor deny to the little ones the friendship and blessing of the Savior. Of such is the kingdom of God. That is the requirement for entry into the kingdom of God, that faith must be as simple and sincere as that of children. They accept Jesus, their Savior, without question and without doubt; they love Him and cling to Him in joyful *abandon*. With solemn seriousness Jesus makes this declaration, that no one can enter into the Kingdom unless he accepts it as a little child. Note: Since the only way in which any one can come to Jesus is by faith, it follows that children can very well believe. Also: Since the only means of grace of which we know that it can transmit faith also to infants is that of Baptism, it follows that we should bring our children to Jesus by means of this Sacrament as soon as possible. Finally: We must strive unceasingly to bring our reason into captivity under the obedience of Christ in the Word, in order that our faith may become simple and childlike.

Denying All for Christ's Sake.

Luke 18, 18—30.

The rich young ruler: V. 18. **And a certain ruler asked Him, saying, Good Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?** V. 19. **And Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou Me good? None is good save one, that is, God.** V. 20. **Thou knowest the commandments: Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Honor thy father and thy mother.** V. 21. **And he said, All these have I kept from my youth up.** V. 22. **Now when Jesus heard these things, He said unto him, Yet lackest thou one thing: sell all that thou hast, and distribute unto the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me.** V. 23. **And when he heard this, he was very sorrowful; for he was very rich.** Cp. Matt. 19, 16—22; Mark 10, 17—22. Jesus was still on the eastern side of the Jordan when the incident occurred which is here narrated. A young rich ruler of a local synagog came to him and asked him, with all

92) Luther, quoted in Stoeckhardt, *Biblische Geschichte des Neuen Testaments*, 213.

marks of respect and esteem: Good Master, by the doing of what will I inherit eternal life? The question gave Jesus one of the best opportunities of confessing Himself to be coequal with God the Father. For He did not decline the honor which lay in the word "good." But He called the attention of the ruler to the word he had used. Jesus was not only good in the sense commonly associated with the word, that of a virtuous man and wise teacher. He is the Good in the absolute sense. So much for the form in which the young man had addressed Him. As for his question, he had mentioned works, he had expressed his belief that the inheriting of eternal life depended upon something that he could do. Jesus takes him up at this point. He reminds him of the commandments which, as ruler of the synagog, he certainly must be familiar with. Note: Jesus does not quote the commandments in the order which is generally followed, thus showing that not the order of the precepts of God, but the keeping of their contents, is the important matter. But when Jesus had named five of the commandments, all of them from the second table of the Law, the ruler made the astounding statement: These all have I kept from my youth, thereby proving that he had no true idea of the spiritual understanding of the Law of God. His conception of his duty according to the commandments was that universally held among the Jews, namely, that a mere outward observance of the letter of the Law was equal to its fulfilment. Only transgressions in deeds and, under certain circumstances, in words were accounted sin; transgressions in desires and thoughts were not taken into consideration. The ruler had evidently made his declaration in good faith, and Jesus loved him for it, Mark 10, 21. Nevertheless, it was necessary for the great Physician to cut deeply in this case, in order to lay bare the tumor of false sanctity. So Jesus told him that he still lacked one thing in order to be perfect and thus to lay claim to the inheritance of heaven. Everything that he had he should distribute to the poor; then he would have a treasure safely laid away in heaven, then, also, he could be the Lord's disciple in truth. The Lord's object was to show the man how far he still was from keeping the commandments as he should, how far from perfect his love toward God and his neighbor was, how completely his heart was still bound up in the things of this world. The advice of Jesus strikes the heart of the matter, and finds its application in the case of every person. We should love God above all things, and if He demands it, if the welfare of the kingdom of God makes it necessary, we should be ready to sacrifice all earthly goods and life itself; and we should at all times serve our neighbor with our money. The test was too much for the young man. He was deeply grieved, he became very sorrowful on account of the words of Jesus. He had been touched in his weakest spot; he was very rich. In giving up his riches he would be denying himself that which his heart placed even above the love and service of Jesus. Thus many people that once heard the Word of God and were attracted by some phase of church-work, have turned their backs upon the Church, and everything it stands for and offers, because their Pharisaic hearts were struck by some sermon concerning their special sinful hobby. It is necessary at all times that the Word of God, the Law, tear the mask of self-righteousness from the face of the sinner before he can become a disciple of Jesus in deed and in truth.

The lesson of the incident: V. 24. **And when Jesus saw that he was very sorrowful, He said, How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!** V. 25. **For it is easier for a camel to go through a needle's eye than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.** V. 26. **And they that heard it said, Who then can be saved?** V. 27. **And He said, The things which are impossible with men are possible with God.** The young ruler had gotten more than he bargained for; he went away from Jesus, and it is very doubtful whether he ever returned. Jesus determined to teach His disciples and others that were near a lesson drawn from the incident. He told them in the form of an exclamation: How difficult, how next to impossible, it is for those that have goods, that are rich, to enter into the kingdom of God! Cp. Matt. 19, 23—30; Mark 10, 23—31. A person that is rich, actually calls the goods that are entrusted to him his own, and thus puts his trust in them, instead of in God alone, who has laid this responsibility upon him, is a servant of mammon, and cannot get to heaven. The difficulty is well illustrated by a proverb after the Oriental fashion, according to which it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man of that kind to enter into the kingdom of heaven. "For the rich people commonly become so entangled in the love and in the lust of riches that they cannot seek Jesus; yea, they do not desire to see Him. All their consolation is centered in money and goods; the more they get, the greater their desire grows to possess still more." 93) But the saying of Jesus was too much for the spiritual understanding of the disciples and other hearers. In astonishment and perplexity they ask: And who can be saved? But Jesus gave them the solution by saying: The impossible with men is possible with God. It is true in general that God's almighty power is not limited. And it is true, with special reference to conversion, that it is by the merciful power of God that sinful people are converted and renewed, that their hearts are torn loose from the love of this world and its riches and turned to His service all alone.

93) Luther, 11, 2415.

Peter's question: V. 28. **Then Peter said, Lo, we have left all and followed Thee.** V. 29. **And He said unto them, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or parents, or brethren, or wife, or children for the kingdom of God's sake** v. 30. **who shall not receive manifold more in this present time and in the world to come life everlasting.** The disciples of Jesus had experienced in their own lives the wonderful mercy of God, who had not only caused them to forsake the things of this world and had wrought faith in their hearts, but had given them the additional privilege of being disciples and friends of their Savior. Peter now reminded Jesus of the fact of their having forsaken all in order to follow Him. It appears even here, however, that the thoughts of Peter were still engaged with things of this world, that the idea of a temporal Messianic kingdom had not yet been driven out entirely. But Jesus deals with him in all patience. He tells him and all the apostles with solemn emphasis that there is no one that has left home or wife or brothers or parents or children for the sake of the kingdom of God who would not receive in return, as a reward of grace, much more, a hundred times more, even in this present world. Even here on earth, in Christ and in the Kingdom of Grace, a Christian finds full compensation for everything that he has given up and sacrificed in this world's goods; for the standards of the kingdom of God are entirely different from those of the world, Mark 10, 30. And finally, when the time set by God has come, He will give to the believers the inheritance of eternal life, not on account of any works or sacrifice, but as a reward of grace. Then all that he may have been obliged to suffer, to sacrifice, to deny, will sink into insignificance and be forgotten in the enjoyment of the heavenly bliss.

The Lord's Third Prediction of His Passion. Luke 18, 31—34.

V. 31. **Then He took unto Him the Twelve and said unto them, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of Man shall be accomplished.** V. 32. **For He shall be delivered unto the Gentiles, and shall be mocked, and spitefully entreated, and spitted on;** v. 33. **and they shall scourge Him, and put Him to death; and the third day He shall rise again.** V. 34. **And they understood none of these things, and this saying was hid from them, neither knew they the things which were spoken.** Twice the Lord had spoken very explicitly of His coming Passion, but the disciples had not understood the reference. Here He took the Twelve aside and placed Himself at their head as their Champion and intrepid Leader. Then He gave them a full prophecy concerning His Passion, enumerating the several outstanding features. To Jerusalem they were going, there the great tragedy was to take place. All the prophecies of the Old Testament concerning the suffering and death of the Servant of the Lord, of the Messiah, would there be fulfilled; all things would happen to the Son of Man as written in the prophets: Delivered into the hands of the Gentiles, derided and mocked, treated with contempt, spat upon. But always, in the end, the definite assurance of His resurrection on the third day. In spite of the detailed account, however, the disciples understood none of these things, the entire matter being hidden from them, they had not the faintest idea what it was all really about. They merely huddled about Him, while amazement and an indefinable dread took hold of them, as of an impending disaster. "Notwithstanding all the information which Christ had given them concerning this awful subject, they could not as yet fully comprehend how the Messiah should suffer; or how their Master, whose power they knew was unlimited, should permit the Jews and Gentiles to torment and slay Him as He here intimates they would."

The Blind Man of Jericho. Luke 18, 35—43.

The passing of Jesus of Nazareth: V. 35. **And it came to pass that as He was come nigh unto Jericho, a certain blind man sat by the wayside begging;** v. 36. **and hearing the multitude pass by, he asked what it meant.** V. 37. **And they told him that Jesus of Nazareth passeth by.** V. 38. **And he cried, saying, Jesus, Thou Son of David, have mercy on me.** V. 39. **And they which went before rebuked him that he should hold his peace; but he cried so much the more, Thou Son of David, have mercy on me.** Cp. Matt. 20, 29—34; Mark 10, 46—52. Jesus had now crossed the Jordan from Perea into Judea and was nearing the city of Jericho. Near this city He healed two blind men, as Matthew relates, one before entering the city, of whom Luke tells, one upon leaving the city, whose healing Mark relates. As Jesus with a large company of people, in addition to His disciples, was nearing the city, the blind man, who sat near the gate of the city, where many people were wont to pass by, heard the sound of the many feet moving along the road and inquired as to the reason. He received the information that it was Jesus, the Prophet of Nazareth, who was passing by. Immediately the man acted as though he were electrified. He cried out with a loud voice, calling upon Jesus to have mercy upon him, giving Him the name which was reserved for the promised Messiah as a title of honor. From the reports concerning Jesus and His work this blind man had gained the right, the saving knowledge concerning Christ, and his faith looked up to the Master as the only one who, in His mercy, could cure him. The leaders of the multitude that were just passing the spot where the blind man was sitting, tried to hush

him up, just as is often done in our days, when helpless cripples are regarded as a nuisance and treated accordingly. But the man was not daunted by their rebukes that he should hold his peace. He continued his cry to Jesus for mercy.

The healing: V. 40. **And Jesus stood, and commanded him to be brought unto Him; and when he was come near, He asked him,** v. 41. **saying, What wilt thou that I shall do unto thee? And he said, Lord, that I may receive my sight.** V. 42. **And Jesus said unto him, Receive thy sight; thy faith hath saved thee.** V. 43. **And immediately he received his sight, and followed Him, glorifying God; and all the people, when they saw it, gave praise unto God.** Jesus, as soon as He heard the plaintive cry, stood still in the road and commanded that the blind man be brought to Him. And now willing hands were found without trouble to render the service required. In order to hear the prayer of faith, Jesus asked the man what he desired Him to do for him. The request of the blind man was incidentally a confession, for he called Jesus Lord, confessing Him to be God, just as he had previously expressed his belief that Jesus was the Messiah. Here was a full confession of faith in the person and in the office of Jesus. In the strength of this faith he made his prayer that he might be able to see, that his eyes might be opened. And Jesus, in the depth of His sympathy for all men, in whatever trouble they may be, spoke the almighty word which opened his eyes: Receive thy sight. His faith had gained the boon of the merciful healing for him. "As soon as the word sounds: Receive thy sight, he believes it; therefore, what he believed now happens to him. That is the first lesson which we should learn from this gospel, namely, to believe the Word of God with complete, trustful heart, without wavering." 94) At once he received his sight and followed after Jesus, with his mouth overflowing with praise to God. Trusting in God's mercy and Christ's love for sinners and His sympathy for those suffering in any way from the curse of sin, he was made whole without delay. And all the people that saw this miracle likewise gave praise to God. Note: A Christian that has received any evidence of the mercy of God, in the countless benefits conferred through the means of God, really never has cause to complain, but should always be found with his mouth singing the praises of Him who has led him out of the darkness of sin and unbelief into His marvelous light.

Summary. *Jesus tells the parables of the importunate widow and of the Pharisee and the publican, blesses little children that are brought to Him, speaks to the rich young ruler concerning sacrifices for His sake, gives His disciples the third prediction of His Passion, and heals the blind man of Jericho.*

94) Luther, 13b, 1678.

CHAPTER 19.

Zacchaeus the Publican. Luke 19, 1—10.

Jesus at Jericho: V. 1. **And Jesus entered and passed through Jericho.** V. 2. **And, behold, there was a man named Zacchaeus, which was the chief among the publicans, and he was rich.** V. 3. **And he sought to see Jesus who He was; and could not for the press, because he was little of stature.** V. 4. **And he ran before, and climbed into a sycomore tree to see him; for he was to pass that way.** Having healed the blind man at the city gate, Jesus continued his way into the city with the intention of passing through, for he was on His way to Jerusalem. But there came an interruption. A man called by name Zacchaeus (pure), who held the position of head man or overseer over the local collectors of taxes, and who had become rich through the extortions connected with his work, was the cause of the delay. The business of publican, or tax collector, in Jericho must have been especially lucrative, for the city was known for its balsam trade, and Jericho was on the main road of traffic between Joppa, Jerusalem, and the country east of the Jordan. So it had been a comparatively easy matter for Zacchaeus, by the use of a little graft, to amass a fortune. Now he had heard much of Jesus and was filled with great curiosity concerning this Prophet of Galilee, what He might look like, what His appearance was. It was an eager and persistent curiosity which took hold of the man; he tried again and again, but for some time without success, for his small size hindered him from seeing over the shoulders of the many people that were crowding around the Lord. And who knows but what the message concerning Jesus had awakened and created the first longings for the mercy of the Savior? "He desired impetuously and diligently, with a devout, humble heart, only to see Christ. That was his sanctuary, that was his snow-white ornament before God's eyes, which ornament the Lord especially commended to His disciples when He said: Be harmless as doves." 95) Finally Zacchaeus hit upon a plan by which he hoped to realize his desire. He took notice of the direction in which Jesus was heading, probably along the main street of the city, and then ran ahead, in front of the crowd, and climbed on a sycomore figtree, such as are common in the valley of the Jordan. In that way he could easily look over

95) Luther, 11, 2418.

the heads of the people and see the Lord when He would reach that point.

The call of the Lord: V. 5. **And when Jesus came to the place, He looked up and saw him, and said unto him, Zacchaeus, make haste and come down; for to-day I must abide at thy house.** V. 6. **And he made haste and came down, and received Him joyfully.** V. 7. **And when they saw it, they all murmured, saying, That He was gone to be guest with a man that is a sinner.** Although this entire proceeding was done without commotion, in silence and with haste, yet Jesus, the omniscient Lord, was very well aware of all that was going on, just as He knew the name of the man in whose heart such feelings had been aroused. The saving grace of Christ planned all with tactful kindness. He came to the spot opposite or beneath the tree with its strange burden; He looked up and saw the publican; He called to him with friendly frankness. He at once fathomed the heart of the man with the same look of revealing omniscience which once followed Nathanael to his position under the fig-tree, John 1, 48; and read his heart's longing. The Lord bids Zacchaeus hurry and come down, since it was necessary for Him to make a visit at his house that same day. With this invitation the Master conveyed His complete understanding of the situation to the heart of the man in the tree, so that the latter was now disposed to pay the most cheerful and hurried obedience to the call. Even so to-day a heart that may be filled with thoughts of doubt, and yet desires to know the Lord more closely, is cheered by the many gracious invitations which come in the Gospel, which are transmitted through the means of grace, and pays joyful obedience to the friendly call of the Savior. Zacchaeus lost no time in climbing down from the tree, for his heart was filled with ecstatic joy, and he welcomed the Lord into his house with grateful hospitality. But the Lord, by this action, again provoked the great mass of the people, for their hatred of the publicans was almost inherent, and they murmured, saying: With a sinful man He has gone to be guest. Human nature has not changed to this day; it is scandalized even now when some person whose special transgressions in the past were well known turns to the Lord and is received into the Christian congregation.

The pledge of Zacchaeus and the Lord's answer: V. 8. **And Zacchaeus stood and said unto the Lord: Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken anything from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold.** V. 9. **And Jesus said unto him, This day is salvation come to this house, forsomuch as he also is a son of Abraham.** V. 10. **For the Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.** Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. Faith is bound to show itself in works of repentance and mercy. It had been no mere curiosity, but desire for salvation which had prompted Zacchaeus to seek the Savior, and now the personal impression created by the Lord in word and deed made his heart sure of its trust. He did not slink into a corner and make half-hearted promises, but made an open confession of his sins and an equally open statement as to his manner of making amends. He promises the Lord to give half of his goods to the poor; as a proof of his entire change of heart he makes restitution. And wherever he has defrauded any man in any manner whatsoever, he is willing to restore the unjust gain fourfold. Cp. Ex. 22, 1. He did this of his own accord; it showed the sincerity of his conversion. "He had been a publican and a usurer; but now that he has the Lord as his guest, matters are changed with him, and he is ready to restore all where he has cheated any man; he also gives half of his goods to the poor. For he believes that they are all his equals and members of Christ; of which he formerly, before Christ came to him, did the opposite, taking money from the poor, grafting and harming wherever he could graft and harm. At once the matter is changed with him; he cares no more for such things; his riches are no longer his treasure, but Christ; he makes use of his goods without discrimination, not that he alone may have a full supply, but that he also may give food and assistance to the poor." 96) Therefore Jesus also, seeing this proof of the faith which He knew to be present in his heart, proclaims this publicly: To-day salvation is come to this house, in the conversion of Zacchaeus by the advent and influence of Christ. Zacchaeus was now in truth a son of Abraham, spiritually considered, a child of the promise. Although the personal ministry of Jesus was confined principally to the children of Israel, He is come to seek and save that which was lost. All poor sinners throughout the wide world are included in His gracious counsel of redemption. That is the purpose of His coming. His seeking of the lost must be done if salvation, rescue, is to come to them all; thert is none excepted.

The Parable of the Talents.

Luke 19, 11—27.

The departure of the nobleman: V. 11. **And as they heard these things, He added and spake a parable, because He was nigh to Jerusalem, and because they thought that the kingdom of God should immediately appear.** V. 12. **He said therefore, A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return.** V. 13. **And he called his ten servants, and delivered them ten pounds, and said unto them, Occupy till I come.** V. 14. **But his citizens hated him, and sent a message after him, saying, We will not have**

96) Luther, 11, 2423.

this man to reign over us. To seek and save that which was lost, this, as Jesus had just stated, was the purpose of His coming. As the Messiah of the world He could have no other object, according to the prophecies of old. And therefore He wanted to impress this fact upon all His hearers, especially His disciples, once more. At the same time He wanted to indicate to them in just what way He expected His servants, His disciples and the believers of all time, to continue His work. He wanted to impress upon them the sense of responsibility in their position as followers of the Lord. He was nearing Jerusalem; the last act of the great drama was about to begin; He would soon be removed from their midst as their visible Leader. They must give up the foolish idea with which they were obsessed, as though Christ would still have a temporal rule, an earthly kingdom. Some of the disciples even now had the idea that He would be proclaimed king at Jerusalem at this time. So He wanted to make it clear to them that He was going away, and that they were, in the mean time, to continue the work which He had begun, in the upbuilding of the Church by the preaching of the Gospel. A certain man of noble birth, a prince, took a journey into a far country in order to take possession of a kingdom which belonged to him. He had the definite purpose and intention to return. But before going, he called ten of his servants to him and gave to them ten pounds, or minae (the value of each being somewhat less than twenty dollars). His instructions were brief and to the point: Do business until I come. The servants were to invest the money profitably, and gain for the master as much as possible. No sooner had the lord left than the citizens of his country sent an embassy after him with the message: We do not want this man to be king over us. They declared a state of open revolt against him.

The accounting: V. 15. **And it came to pass that, when he was returned, having received the kingdom, then he commanded these servants to be called unto him, to whom he had given the money, that he might know how much every man had gained by trading.** V. 16. **Then came the first, saying, Lord, thy pound hath gained ten pounds.** V. 17. **And he said unto him, Well, thou good servant; because thou hast been faithful in a very little, have thou authority over ten cities.** V. 18. **And the second came, saying, Lord, thy pound hath gained five pounds.** V. 19. **And he said likewise to him, Be thou also over five cities.** V. 20. **And another came, saying, Lord, behold, here is thy pound, which I have kept laid up in a napkin;** v. 21. **for I feared thee, because thou art an austere man; thou takest up that thou layedst not down, and reapest that thou didst not sow.** The prince pursued his intention in spite of all the hatred and enmity of his rebellious subjects; he did not change his plans in one particle; at the appointed time he returned to his country. His first official act upon his return was to summon the servants before him to whom he had entrusted the silver. This was the most important business: it had to be settled before anything else was undertaken. He wanted to know what business they had done and what success they had had, for the object had been to test their fidelity and capacity. The first servant came before him with a modest report. Successful he had been indeed, but he ascribed this to the mina of the lord: it had gained ten further pounds. That was a splendid increase, showing the hard and faithful work of the servant. The lord therefore praised the servant as good, noble, devoted, and rewarded him far beyond his hopes and deserts, giving him authority over ten cities. It was a gracious reward of faithfulness. A second servant had had similar success and reported on it with the same modesty. He was also praised highly and placed in charge of five cities. But with a third servant things did not look well from the start. With slinking gait he approached, with whining voice he attempted to excuse his failure. He brought back the one piece of money which the lord had entrusted to him, having had it wrapped up and carefully laid away in a napkin. As in the case of the average useless servant, his excuse contained an accusation against the master. He had been afraid on account of the austerity of the lord, literally, because he was such an exacting employer. Besides, he took things which he had not laid down, and harvested where he had not sowed. The servant had, from the start, despaired of pleasing the master, since he was afraid of an exorbitant demand for profit. This was a feeble and unjust accusation, merely calculated to cover over the servant's laziness. It was his business to serve the master to the best of his ability.

The punishment: V. 22. **And he saith unto him, Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee, thou wicked servant. Thou knewest that I was an austere man, taking up that I laid not down, and reaping that I did not sow;** v. 23. **wherefore, then, gavest not thou my money into the bank, that at my coming I might have required mine own with usury?** V. 24. **And he said unto them that stood by, Take from him the pound, and give it to him that hath ten pounds.** V. 25. **(And they said unto him, Lord, he hath ten pounds.)** V. 26. **For I say unto you, That unto every one which hath shall be given; and from him that hath not, even that he hath shall be taken away from him.** V. 27. **But those mine enemies which would not that I should reign over them bring hither, and slay them before me.** The useless servant was condemned by his own words; by them he was convicted as lazy and wicked. If he had had

that honest conviction that the master was actually so strict and exacting that he expected to get blood out of a stone, he should have remembered his station and acted in accordance with his conviction. It would have been a perfectly simple matter for him to have taken the money which he feared to invest of his own responsibility and put it into the bank. With sarcastic emphasis the lord says that he, upon his arrival, might have taken his own with interest. Then the servant would have kept his fingers and his conscience unsoiled. Incidentally, he would have saved himself the punishment which now descended upon him. His one lonely piece of money was given to him that had ten pounds. And when those that were present, probably some of the other servants, faintly remonstrated, saying that that servant was already well provided, the master told them: To every one that hath there will be given; but from him that hath not even that which he hath will be taken. Every one that has a gain to show because he has faithfully managed the affairs entrusted to him will be rewarded with more and greater things than he originally received. But he that has no gain to show, through his own fault, because he has not used the gifts and goods entrusted to him, will be deprived of all that he has. But so far as the citizens of that country were concerned, the lord's sentence upon them is that they should be punished in proportion to their crime of rebellion. They should be brought before him and there be slaughtered, thus paying the full penalty for their crime.

The meaning of the parable is evident. Christ is the noble-born Prince. Though born a true man, He was and is at the same time God, blessed forever. He left His country, His people, the chosen nation of God, through Passion, death, and resurrection, Phil. 2, 8. 9; Heb. 1, 3. 8. 9, in order to sit at the right hand of God the Father Almighty and thus to receive, also according to His human nature, the kingly power and glory of His Father. The citizens of His country are the Jews, the children of Israel. They openly declared themselves against the Lord; they were a rebellious, stiff-necked people. They wanted nothing of the rule of the exalted Christ. And with them all unbelievers cry: We will not have this man to reign over us. The servants of the Lord are the believers, the Christians. To them Christ has entrusted, in the interval between His ascension and His coming to Judgment, many splendid gifts and goods, both spiritual and temporal, out of free kindness and grace. "Here human merits are rejected; for thou hearest that the servants take the money from the lord, in order to do business and gain with it. And the lord, because they were faithful, gives them the money and the gain, and, in addition, the cities, all for grace and goodness."[97] Above all, the Lord has given to His Christians, to the Church on earth, His Gospel. With this, with the means of grace, they are to do business, they are to gain souls for the kingdom of heaven. And those Christians in whom faith is mighty to drive them onward are glad to serve the Lord to the best of their ability. They serve in church, in school, in the various organizations which aid the spread of the Gospel; they give time, money, work, with never a thought of sacrifice, some with more ability and success, some with less. There are some, however, that bear the name of Christians, but know nothing of the power of Christianity, that neglect the work of the Lord, that are never interested when they are approached, that are always too busy with their own affairs. Such people are useless servants, hypocrites. The day of reckoning is coming. Then the Lord will reward the faithful servants far above their work, with the reward of grace; He will give them glory and bliss without end. But the useless, lazy servants will receive their reward according as they have merited it. They will have no part in the eternal kingdom of Christ. And as for the open enemies of Christ, the rebels against His rule of kindness, the great Judgment Day will bring them everlasting shame and condemnation. With the Jews that called down the blood of Jesus upon themselves and their children, they will be punished with everlasting death and destruction.

97) Luther, 11, 2401.

Christ's Entry into Jerusalem.

Luke 19, 28—48.

Christ commissions two disciples: V. 28. **And when He had thus spoken, He went before, ascending up to Jerusalem.** V. 29. **And it came to pass, when He was come nigh to Bethphage and Bethany, at the mount called the Mount of Olives, He sent two of His disciples,** v. 30. **saying, Go ye into the village over against you, in the which at your entering ye shall find a colt tied, whereon yet never man sat; loose him, and bring him hither.** V. 31. **And if any man ask you, Why do ye loose him? thus shall ye say unto him, Because the Lord hath need of him.** Cp. Matt. 21, 1—11; Mark 11, 1—11. Not so strongly as Mark, chap. 10, 32, and yet with considerable emphasis, Luke places Jesus at the head of the little company that was going up to Jerusalem. He was their Hero, their Leader, their Champion, going into the face of danger for the sake of the redemption of the world. From the low country in the neighborhood of Jericho, Jesus, His disciples, and other pilgrims that were with them, ascended to the highlands, to the mountains, on one of which Jerusalem was situated. Jesus stayed in Bethany on the Sabbath, continuing His journey on the next day. Both Bethany and Bethphage were situated on the southeastern slope of the Mount of Olives, the

latter being hardly more than a hamlet or cross-roads, with a number of farm-buildings. When Jesus had reached a point on the outskirts of Bethany where the road led toward Bethphage, He sent two of His disciples with the order to go quickly ahead of the slowly moving procession into the hamlet over against them, into the suburban country-place. Upon entering, they would find there a colt tied in a certain place, which had never been ridden, no man having ever sat upon it. This they should loose and bring to Him. If there should be opposition on the part of any man, either the owner or some of the laborers that might be near, as to why they were untying the animal, their answer should be that the Lord had need of the animal.

Jesus ready for the entry: V. 32. **And they that were sent went their way, and found even as He had said unto them.** V. 33. **And as they were loosing the colt, the owners thereof said unto them, Why loose ye the colt?** V. 34. **And they said, The Lord hath need of him.** V. 35. **And they brought him to Jesus; and they cast their garments upon the colt, and they set Jesus thereon.** What the omniscience of Jesus had seen at a distance, the disciples found true as they came to the indicated spot. And when they were loosing the colt from the post or doorway where it was tied, the masters of the animal actually did ask why they were taking this liberty. But when the disciples answered according to the instructions of Jesus, that the Lord had need of the animal, no further objection was raised. So they brought the colt to Jesus, and, quickly throwing upon it their mantles, or upper garments, instead of a saddle, set Jesus upon the unbroken animal. The entire incident is charged with the miraculous. The Lord here sent forth a few rays of divine glory through the veil of His humanity. He knew where the colt and the mother animal were standing. A word from Him sufficed to make the owners willing to let Him have the foal. It was His attitude that inspired the disciples to act as they did, thereby unconsciously aiding in the fulfilment of a prophetic saying. Note: Even as the disciples trusted in the instruction of Jesus, even though the keeping of this might bring them into trouble, so all Christians should be willing to trust in the Word of God at all times and to follow its precepts without hesitation, even if the keeping of them may call down upon their heads difficulties and persecutions. It is better to be on the side of the omniscient, almighty God than upon that of the powerless world.

The joyful reception by the people: V. 36. **And as He went, they spread their clothes in the way.** V. 37. **And when He was come nigh, even now at the descent of the Mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works that they had seen,** v. 38. **saying, Blessed be the King that cometh in the name of the Lord. Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!** V. 39. **And some of the Pharisees from among the multitude said unto Him, Master, rebuke Thy disciples.** V. 40. **And He answered and said unto them, I tell you that, if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out.** As a snowball which begins to roll at the top of a mountain soon grows to a mighty avalanche, sweeping everything before it, so the enthusiasm that took hold of the disciples soon grew to a holy ecstasy, infecting also the bands of pilgrims that were going the same way and others that came out of the city to meet the procession. As Jesus continued on His way toward Jerusalem, they took their upper garments, their festival clothes, and spread them out on the road, as for the reception of a mighty king, an emperor. As He then reached the spot where the road doubles the brow of Mount Olivet, the excitement of the multitudes rose to its greatest height. The entire company of all the disciples broke forth into an exultant doxology, praising God for all the wonderful things that they had seen. They sang with a loud voice a section of the great Hallel, Ps. 118, 26, with such additions as suited the occasion. They rendered all glory to the highest God for the rich manifestation of His grace in Christ the Redeemer. They sang His praises, because through the atonement of the Messiah the enmity between God and man had now been brought to an end. As on the great festivals, the multitudes could not restrain their joy, for the disciples were not alone in their enthusiastic outburst, but were ably seconded by the people. The joyous shout rose in a triumphant chorus, until the sides of the hills and the depths of the Kidron Valley resounded with the triumphant acclaim. And when some of the ubiquitous Pharisees began their usual grumbling, asking the Lord to rebuke and silence His disciples, they received poor comfort. For He told them that the very stones would burst forth in shouting if the disciples should hold their peace. The entire demonstration was arranged by God for the sake of His beloved Son. The Spirit of the Lord had taken hold of the pilgrims for a short while. God wanted to give His Son evidence and witness of the fact that the time was coming when all tongues would have to confess that Jesus is the Lord, though it was necessary for Him first to pass through the valley of His inexpressibly bitter Passion. Yet the work which He was to perform in Jerusalem was great and glorious and worthy of being praised by all creatures.

Christ's lament over Jerusalem: V. 41. **And when He was come near, He beheld the city, and wept over it,** v. 42. **saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! But now they are hid from**

thine eyes. V. 43. For the days shall come upon thee that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side, v. 44. and shall lay thee even with the ground and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another, because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation. Jesus continued on His way, accompanied by shouts of "Hosanna!" and songs of praise, until He reached a point opposite the city. And there suddenly He burst into tears, weeping aloud, as one in the depths of grief. Note: The tears of Jesus over the reprobate city of Jerusalem are the best evidence that He is sincere in His redemption for the sins of the whole world, that He wants all men to be saved. If the inhabitants of the capital city had but known, if they had but had the right understanding, if they had not deliberately hardened their hearts! In extraordinary fulness and brightness their day of grace had come upon them, since the Son of God personally had come into their midst and brought the glorious Gospel of their redemption to them. But now the day of grace was drawing to its close, and still the understanding pertaining to their salvation was hidden before their eyes. Because of their unbelief and hard-heartedness the time of grace was rapidly coming to a close, and the salvation which they had foolishly sought by means of works was as far from them as ever. And not only the fact of their unbelief and hard-heartedness caused the bitter tears of the Lord, but also the fact that He knew the fate of the city, saw the final destruction taking place before the vision of His omniscience. There is a picture of coming ruin before His eyes: Enemies coming upon the city, like hawks upon their prey; they dig trenches and erect walls of palisades all around the capital; they draw an impenetrable ring around her; they enclose her from all sides, leaving not a loophole of escape; they cast the city down to the ground and all her inhabitants within her (raze the city, dash the people to pieces); they do not permit one stone to remain upon the other within her: and all, because Jerusalem and its inhabitants had refused to recognize the time of their visitation, when the Lord came to them in the richness of His mercy and offered full atonement, life, and salvation to all the people of Israel. If any one despises the visitation of grace that comes upon him in time, when the Word of God is brought to his attention, when he has the use of the means of grace, then the time will come when spiritual blindness will set in, as the penalty of such contempt; and then comes the Judgment. O, that all people to whom the Word of grace is proclaimed, would remember at all times the bitter tears of the Lord over Jerusalem, and know in time the things which belong to their peace!

The purging of the Temple: V. 45. **And He went into the Temple, and began to cast out them that sold therein, and them that bought, v. 46. saying unto them, It is written, My house is the house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves. V. 47. And He taught daily in the Temple. But the chief priests and the scribes and the chief of the people sought to destroy Him, v. 48. and could not find what they might do; for all the people were very attentive to hear Him.** It was on the next morning that Jesus carried out a plan that had occurred to Him the day before, when He had seen the abuses to which the Temple had been put by the people. Since it would have been very inconvenient, in some cases almost impossible, for every Israelite to bring his sacrificial animal from his home to Jerusalem, the Lord permitted those living at a distance to buy their sacrificial beasts and birds in Jerusalem. The consequence was that a thriving business soon developed, which seems to have been controlled by some of the religious leaders themselves, for they were not at all averse to making money. All would have been well if they had held their market somewhere down in the lower town. But the venders had moved up into the neighborhood of the Temple, and finally into its very court. There were the stalls for the oxen, the pens for the sheep and goats, the coops for the doves. There were also the money-counters; for it was necessary to make change. The fact that their methods profaned the courts of the Lord had apparently not entered into the minds of these eager business men. But the Lord made short work of their marketing, of their buying and selling. He began to thrust out the buyers and sellers, reminding them meanwhile of the words of the prophet concerning the fact that the house of God should be considered a house of prayer for all people, Is. 56, 7, as Solomon had said in his prayer of dedication. They had converted it into a den of robbers, where the people sat haggling over prices and pocketing excessive profits. It was not only the marketing that profaned the house of the Lord, but also the fact that many of the people came there without true repentance, intending to buy themselves free from the wrath to come with sacrifices. But all sacrifices and prayers that are made with an unrepentant heart are an abomination in the sight of God, a blasphemy of the most holy name of God. But the Lord is the Judge of all such, and will, in the end, pass sentence upon all such as are guilty of hypocrisy. After Jesus had thus purged the Temple, He taught in its halls daily. The leaders of the people, the members of the Sanhedrin, were greatly embittered over His words and works, and they sought for some way of destroying Him. But they were afraid to carry out their murderous designs; they could find no way of approaching Him with an evidently hostile intention. For the common people all together, during these days, were most attentive to hear Him; they hung upon His every word

as though they could not get enough of the words of salvation. The word used by Luke describes not only the most careful attention, but also the very great pleasure and gratification that was theirs because they were privileged to hear Jesus. Thus all men should at all times hang upon the Word of eternal life as it has been revealed in the Gospel, for it testifies of the Savior of the world.

Summary. *Jesus visits Zacchaeus, the publican, in Jericho, tells the parable of the pounds, enters Jerusalem in triumph, but weeps in the knowledge of the future fate of the city, and purges the Temple.*

CHAPTER 20.

The Authority of Jesus. Luke 20, 1—18.

The challenge of the Jewish leaders: V. 1. **And it came to pass that on one of those days, as He taught the people in the Temple, and preached the Gospel, the chief priests and the scribes came upon Him with the elders,** v. 2. **and spake unto Him, saying, Tell us, by what authority doest Thou these things, or who is he that gave Thee this authority?** On one of those days, the last days before the great Passion, on Tuesday of Holy Week. Cp. 21, 23—27; Mark 11, 27—33. Jesus was teaching the people in the Temple after His custom, the content of His preaching being summarized by Luke as preaching the Gospel, the good news of salvation. To the very last Christ's great concern was for the eternal welfare of the people entrusted to His ministry, and there was no greater benefit that He could give them than that of the message of redemption, the sweet and comforting proclamation of the forgiveness of all their sins through His labor of love. But Jesus was disturbed in this occupation by the leaders of the Jews. They came upon Him, stood over against Him. It is not so much the suddenness of the coming as the deliberateness and solemnity of their appearance that is brought out by the word. It denotes the official character of their coming, for they came, chief priests, scribes, elders, either authorized representatives of the great Jewish council, or the Sanhedrin in a body. They wanted Jesus to be impressed at once with the importance of their embassy. They demanded an explanation from the Lord, for He acted with such definite authority and power, in the matter of cleansing the Temple as well as in His preaching in the Temple, that they bristled with resentment. They wanted to know who it was that had given Him such power. It was in no way a humble request for truth, otherwise they would have been remarkably dense. With all the great miracles happening before their eyes and with the overwhelming power of the preaching of Christ as evidence before them, they knew beyond the shadow of a doubt that His authority was divine. But they had hardened their own hearts, and they now challenged Him before the people, to hurt His prestige, if possible.

The answer of Jesus: V. 3. **And He answered and said unto them, I will also ask you one thing; and answer Me:** v. 4. **The baptism of John, was it from heaven or of men?** V. 5. **And they reasoned with themselves, saying, If we shall say, From heaven, He will say, Why, then, believed ye him not?** V. 6. **But and if we say, Of men, all the people will stone us; for they be persuaded that John was a prophet.** V. 7. **And they answered that they could not tell whence it was.** V. 8. **And Jesus said unto them, Neither tell I you by what authority I do these things.** The challenge of the Jews Jesus answered with a counter-question, which incidentally contained the answer they demanded. For His question implied that He personally knew John's ministry to have been a divine commission. And if the Jews would concede so much to be true, they would admit also the authority of Jesus, for John had expressly testified concerning the Prophet of Galilee. The question of the Lord was therefore a poser for the members of the Sanhedrin, since Jesus made their answer the condition of His own answering. They well knew that to this question, whether the baptism of John had been done by divine authority and commission, there were only two answers possible, yes or no, from heaven or of men. They therefore conferred very earnestly among themselves in order to find some way out of the dilemma, either alternative being exceedingly distasteful to them. If they should say: From heaven, they would thereby invite the just censure of Christ on account of their refusal to believe. Should they say, on the other hand, that John had no divine commission, but acted solely on his own authority, they would incur the hatred of the people, who would probably stone them without the slightest compunction. For the people at large had the firm persuasion that John was a prophet, and would therefore have meted out quick justice upon any blasphemous denier of this truth. And so the wise leaders of the people had to acknowledge themselves outwitted and unable to answer; whereupon Jesus informed them that His answer would also be deferred. They had actually received both answer and refutation, and well they felt it. They had to admit to their own hearts: If even the baptism and ministry of John was from heaven, then Christ, whose miracles and preaching both proclaimed Him a greater than John, would have still greater authority to act as He did in the world. Note: It appears from

this story how despicable, even from the standpoint of mere morality, unbelief must acknowledge itself to be. The unbelievers cannot deny the power of the truth, and yet refuse to bow to the truth. And so they try to avert disaster by making use of lies, subterfuges, and excuses. If a Christian is firmly grounded in the truth of the Scriptures, it will not even be necessary for him to know all the arguments of the opponents in advance. By simply marshaling facts of Scripture and calmly standing on the infallibility of the Bible, he can confound, even if he cannot convince, the gainsayers.

The parable of the wicked husbandmen: V. 9. **Then began He to speak to the people this parable: A certain man planted a vineyard, and let it forth to husbandmen, and went into a far country for a long time.** V. 10. **And at the season he sent a servant to the husbandmen that they should give him of the fruit of the vineyard. But the husbandmen beat him, and sent him away empty.** V. 11. **And again he sent another servant; and they beat him also, and entreated him shamefully, and sent him away empty.** V. 12. **And again he sent a third; and they wounded him also, and cast him out.** Luke gives the beginning of this parable in a very brief form, omitting the detailed account of the planting of the vineyard. Cp. Matt. 21, 33—46; Mark 12, 1—12. Jesus told this parable to the people, but in the presence of at least some of the Jewish leaders. They all would understand the reference to the vineyard, since a very similar description is found Is. 5, 1—7. The owner, having made all the necessary arrangements, gave his vineyard into the charge of certain vine-dressers, and himself went on a long journey, to be away for a long time. At the proper time, however, at the season of fruit each year, he sent servants to the husbandmen, to whom the latter should give that part of the fruit or of its proceeds which belonged to the owner. But the wicked vine-dressers had determined, if possible, to get the vineyard into their own possession, to do therewith what they pleased; and they carried out their intention of discouraging the owner in their own way. Just as regularly as the master sent servants, so regularly did they heap indignities upon them. The first one they beat, literally, gave him a sound thrashing; the second one they not only beat, but they also treated him in a shameful manner, putting him up to disgrace before all the people; the third one they wounded severely, and then cast him out of the vineyard. It was a picture of such utter wickedness that the Lord drew that it stood before the eyes of all the hearers with great vividness and distinctness. And in every case the wicked husbandmen sent the servant away empty.

The climax of the story and its application: V. 13. **Then said the lord of the vineyard, What shall I do? I will send my beloved son; it may be they will reverence him when they see him.** V. 14. **But when the husbandmen saw him, they reasoned among themselves, saying, This is the heir; come, let us kill him, that the inheritance may be ours.** V. 15. **So they cast him out of the vineyard and killed him. What therefore shall the lord of the vineyard do unto them?** V. 16. **He shall come and destroy these husbandmen, and shall give the vineyard to others. And when they heard it, they said, God forbid!** V. 17. **And He beheld them and said, What is this, then, that is written, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner?** V. 18. **Whosoever shall fall upon that stone shall be broken; but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder.** The patience of the master of the vineyard is brought out with remarkable power. He deliberates upon the situation with himself, finally concluding to send his only, his beloved son. Surely the vine-dressers would not be so lacking in all qualities of decency and honorable dealing as to show disrespect and reverence for the son of the owner, whose authority stood second only to that of his father: I should think that without doubt they will reverence him. But his kindness had not reckoned with the utter depravity of the wicked husbandmen. For, seeing the son coming, the renters immediately held a consultation, with the result that they determined to kill the heir and to put themselves into possession of the property. And, acting upon this heinous plan, they took the son, cast him out of the vineyard, and put him to death.

The explanation of the parable must have been evident to the leaders of the Jews at once. The owner of the vineyard is God. The vineyard, as Isaiah says in his song, is the kingdom of God, which He had planted in the midst of His people, the children of Israel. God had made Israel His people by the covenant of Mount Sinai. And His people had lacked nothing under His fatherly care. He had planted the hedge of His Law around them, He had given them the tower of the kingdom of David, and the wine of the Word of God flowed in streams of unchanging richness. But the great benefits which God showered upon His people were not repaid by them in kind. The vine-dressers are the individual members of the Jewish congregation, especially the leaders of the nation. When God sent them His servants, the prophets, expecting from them the fruit, the obedience they owed Him, these servants were treated with contempt and every form of hatred. They were despised, derided, mistreated, and even put to death, 2 Kings 17, 13. 14; 2 Chron. 36, 15. 16. Isaiah, Amos, Micah, Jeremiah, Zechariah, the son of Jehoiadah, and others were obliged to feel the murderous hatred of the Jews, Heb. 11, 36; Acts 7, 52. When all other means had failed, God sent His only-begotten

Son. But against Him their enmity rose to heights hitherto untouched. They held councils against Him to kill Him. They did not want Him to rule over their nation as the King of grace and mercy. The Jewish leaders wanted to rule the people in their own selfish way, for their own sinful gain. And so the murder of Christ was the climax of their wickedness.

Instead of ending the parable in the usual narrative style, Jesus, for the sake of emphasis, put the direct question to His hearers as to what the owner of the vineyard would do to those wicked vine-dressers. And He answered Himself, saying that he would come and destroy those husbandmen, and give the vineyard to others. This answer was echoed by some of the bystanders, though the chief priests and scribes felt that the parable was spoken for them. Some of them, therefore, called out in apparent horror: Let it not be done! Since the Jews rejected Christ and His Gospel, the Lord carried out His judgment against them by taking from them the proclamation of His love and giving it to the heathen, many of whom heeded His call and brought forth fruits meet for the kingdom of God. Undisturbed by their shocked objection, therefore, Jesus fixed His eyes upon the Jews and reminded them of the words of the prophet, in the very Hallel Psalm which they sang with so much show of sincerity on their great festivals, Ps. 118, 22. The chosen people rejected the Chosen Stone, and were therefore rejected by God. Christ is the Corner-stone of His Church, Eph. 2, 20. By faith in His atonement there is salvation for both Jew and Gentile. But every one that rejects the salvation through His blood must take the bitter consequences which he thus brings upon himself. It is a peculiar, a paradox judgment that falls upon the opponents of the Gospel. Foolish, mentally deranged, and spiritually blind people they are that want to run their heads, with the product of man's wisdom, against the rock of the eternal Wisdom of God. Instead of making so much as a dent in the Rock of Ages, they find themselves staggering back with badly battered heads. And their rejection, in turn, reacts upon them, for the Stone falls on them with crushing judicial effect. They have their sentence of condemnation even here in time. And they will find out, in a dreadful eternity, what it means to reject the mercy of God. These solemn words of warning may well be brought to the attention of many people in our days that think the world has outgrown the old Gospel of salvation through the redemption of the blood of Jesus.

The Pharisees and Sadducees Confuted.

Luke 20, 19—47.

The question of the Pharisees: V. 19. **And the chief priests and the scribes the same hour sought to lay hands on Him; and they feared the people, for they perceived that He had spoken this parable against them.** V. 20. **And they watched Him, and sent forth spies, which should feign themselves just men, that they might take hold of His words, that so they might deliver Him unto the power and authority of the governor.** V. 21. **And they asked Him, saying, Master, we know that Thou sayest and teachest rightly, neither acceptest Thou the person of any, but teachest the way of God truly.** V. 22. **Is it lawful for us to give tribute unto Caesar, or no?** So embittered were the scribes and the chief priests on account of the merciless frankness of Jesus that they sought to lay violent hands upon Him in that very hour. But their fear of the people caused them to take such a step under advisement. Though they fairly ached to vent their anger upon Jesus, since they understood that the parable had been spoken against them, yet they deemed it expedient not to try extreme measures. The people at the time of Jesus, not having received the proper instruction in the Word of God, were about as fickle as the majority of the people to-day that live without God in the world and are driven hither and thither by every wind of doctrine, no matter from which side it is presented. But they had to do something to have an outlet for their feelings, and so they employed watchers and sent them to observe every move the Lord made and every word He spoke. The instructions of these spies were simple. They were to simulate great piety and righteousness, — surely not a difficult matter for the sanctimonious hypocrites, — all for the purpose of laying hold of some word of His, which might be construed in His disfavor. In that event the Jewish leaders wanted to deliver Him to the rule and authority of the Roman governor. To strike once and for always, under the semblance of honesty, in the pose of men that were sincerely anxious to know and do their duty, that was the program of the Jewish leaders. Their ingenuousness in the entire matter seems pitiful when the omniscience of Christ is taken into account. But they earnestly try to insinuate themselves into His favor by words of honeyed flattery. There are three points which they hold up before Him in order that He may not recognize their true selves under the mask. They flattered Him that He had sound judgment, that He always said the right thing at the right time; they praised His impartiality, that it made no difference to Him whom the sentence would strike, so long as the truth prevailed; they gave due deference to His sincerity, that He always said just what He thought. All of which, in their mouths, was the basest and most hideous flattery. But what made the matter almost ghastly was the fact that every word they uttered was true, in the full sense of the word. If only they had come to Him with sincerity in their heart and with openness of mind, then He would have been but too glad to lead their steps on the right way for their soul's salvation. Their

question was in the nature of an alternative, whether it was the right, the proper, the obligatory thing to pay tribute, the imperial tax to the Roman emperor, or not. Whether the answer of Jesus proved to be positive or negative, the Pharisees hoped to gain the upper hand. For should He, in the presence of such notorious opponents of the Roman government, declare Himself against the payment of the tax, then they could accuse Him before the governor. But should He declare Himself in favor of paying the tax, then they could fasten the suspicion upon Him, as though He were not the true friend of the people, but an abettor of the Roman tyranny.

The answer of Jesus: V. 23. **But He perceived their craftiness and said unto them, Why tempt ye Me?** V. 24. **Show Me a penny. Whose image and superscription hath it? They answered and said, Caesar's.** V. 25. **And He said unto them, Render therefore unto Caesar the things which be Caesar's, and unto God the things which be God's.** V. 26. **And they could not take hold of His words before the people; and they marveled at His answer, and held their peace.** Jesus, the omniscient Son of God, noticed their craft, their sly cunning, even before they started to make their request. And He is not wanting in the frankness which they have just praised in telling them what He thought of them. He plainly told them that He knew their thoughts in trying to tempt Him. He then asked for a denarius, the coin in which the imperial tax was usually paid (value, about 17 cents). Then He demanded information as to the picture and the inscription stamped upon the coin. Note: Instead of explaining to them at once what He told them afterwards, He made them give the information, making it appear that they had led Him to the conclusion, in order to confound them and win the people. Since the coin bore the emperor's picture, it presented irrefutable evidence that the emperor was the ruler of the land, for the coins of a strange country are not legal tender in the homeland. And so the conclusion of Jesus seemed the only one that was justified under the circumstances, to give the things of Caesar to Caesar and the things of God to God. That is what God demands. The people of God, the Christians, will, above all, give due honor and obedience to God. In matters which pertain to God, the Word of God, Christian worship, faith, and conscience, they are obedient only to God, and reject all interference of men. But in temporal things, in matters which concern this world only, such as money, goods, life, Christians are obedient to the government of the country in which they are living. The State is not to interfere in the matters of the Church, and the Church is not to meddle in the business and affairs of the State. This answer of Jesus, while it satisfied the people, completely baffled the questioners. They could find no point at which they might take hold of, and attack, the Lord. At the same time, they could not repress a grudging, reluctant admiration for the clear distinction made by the Lord, and so they quietly withdrew.

The question of the Sadducees: V. 27. **Then came to Him certain of the Sadducees, which deny that there is any resurrection; and they asked Him,** v. 28. **saying, Master, Moses wrote unto us, If any man's brother die, having a wife, and he die without children, that his brother should take his wife, and raise up seed unto his brother.** V. 29. **There were therefore seven brethren; and the first took a wife, and died without children.** V. 30. **And the second took her to wife, and he died childless.** V. 31. **And the third took her; and in like manner the seven also; and they left no children, and died.** V. 32. **Last of all the woman died also.** V. 33. **Therefore in the resurrection, whose wife of them is she? For seven had her to wife.** Cp. Matt. 22, 23—33; Mark 12, 18—27. The chief priests and scribes having ignominiously failed in their attack, the Sadducees hoped to have better luck with a catch question which they had devised upon the basis of a story, real or invented for the occasion. The chief characteristic of the Sadducees is given by the evangelist, namely, that they denied the resurrection. They also denied the existence of angels and refused to accept any books of the Old Testament as having full authority but the five books of Moses. Their question, while striking at the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead which Jesus preached, had its direct concern with the institution of the so-called levirate marriage, Deut. 25, 5—10. The rule made by Moses required that a man marry the widow of his brother in case there was no male issue and the brothers had been residing on the same family estate. Now the case which the Sadducees presented concerned seven brothers who, in accordance with this rule, had married the same woman in succession, all of them dying without issue. And last of all the woman died also. The question of the Sadducees, which they thought very clever, was regarding the husband's rights in this case, after the resurrection had taken place. The successive marriages had purposely been so graphically described, in order that the great difficulty of the situation and its ridiculousness might appear at once. Now if there be such a thing as a resurrection, which, they sneeringly implied, could not be, how will this difficulty be solved? Is it not flatly insurmountable? With similar arguments, that lack, however, the cleverness of this story, the opponents of the Scriptural resurrection try to ridicule the hope of the Christians, and there is an interesting lesson in the manner in which Christ handles the situation.

The answer of the Lord: V. 34. **And Jesus,**

answering, said unto them, The children of this world marry and are given in marriage; v. 35. **but they which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage;** v. 36. **neither can they die any more; for they are equal unto the angels; and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection.** V. 37. **Now that the dead are raised, even Moses showed at the bush, when he calleth the Lord the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.** V. 38. **For He is not a God of the dead, but of the living; for all live unto Him.** First of all, Jesus corrects an entirely false idea which the question of the Sadducees showed them to be holding or to be inferring from the belief of others. So long as people are in this present physical world, they are subject to the laws of the propagation of the human race, they are under the blessing which God gave to our first parents, Gen. 1, 27. 28. And the necessity of marriage is emphasized by the sinfulness of human nature, 1 Cor. 7, 2. For that reason they marry and are given in marriage. But those that in the judgment of God will be accounted worthy of the life to come, those that will be taken up into the bliss of heaven, those that will obtain the real resurrection, that unto life, they will no longer be subject to such conditions. For in that life they will be immortal, and will no longer be dependent upon propagation and increase. There will be no marriage in heaven, because all persons will there, like the angels, be sexless. Since they are children of the resurrection, since they have become partakers of the resurrection, they are children of God. All old things that pertained to the life of the flesh will then have passed away, and all things will be new. The believers will indeed have their true bodies, but transfused with the spiritual, heavenly existence. That is one argument. And the second concerns the actual Scriptural proof for the resurrection. Jesus here very wisely refers only to the Pentateuch, to the five books of Moses, choosing His proof-text from one of these books, in order to conform to the idea of the Sadducees. That the dead actually do rise again, Moses indicates very plainly in the story of the burning bush, Ex. 3, 6. For the text there calls God the Lord of Abraham and of Isaac and of Jacob. In popular belief the patriarchs may have been adjudged dead, but they could not have been, since God is called their Lord. And He is not the God of the dead, but of the living, for all live to Him. Before Him they are living, and so He accounts them. The souls of the righteous men of all times are alive and in the presence of God in eternal happiness. This is true of all believers of all times. And this view and exposition of God is infallible. Therefore we have the confidence that God will raise all those that are His, also according to the body, out of the grave, to a new, blessed, eternal life.

The counter-question of Jesus: V. 39. **Then certain of the scribes, answering, said, Master, Thou hast well said.** V. 40. **And after that they durst not ask Him any question at all.** V. 41. **And He said unto them, How say they that Christ is David's Son?** V. 42. **And David himself saith in the Book of Psalms, The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit Thou on My right hand,** v. 43. **till I make Thine enemies Thy footstool.** V. 44. **David therefore calleth Him Lord, how is He, then, his Son?** The answer of Jesus had been so convincing that even some of the scribes had to admit that He had spoken well. And all the enemies having been vanquished and no longer daring to ask any questions, the Lord, on His part, assumed the offensive. The question which He here put is one of the great questions of the ages. Its answer has become a touchstone to distinguish the believers from the unbelievers. How can people say that Christ is the Son of David? What think ye of Christ, whose son is He? How does the fact that He is called David's Son agree with the fact that David himself, in Ps. 110, 1, calls Him his Lord? Though Christ therefore is truly the Son of David, the descendant of David according to the flesh, yet He is at the same time a Lord, David's Lord, the Son of God. Now, since Jesus had from the beginning claimed for Himself the Sonship of God, Christ's is the unanswerable question of the ages for all such as do not believe the Scriptures or want to modify the Bible to suit their so-called modern ideas. But for every one that believes the old Gospel word for word, He is true God, born of the Father from eternity, and also true man, born of the Virgin Mary.

A warning against the scribes: V. 45. **Then in the audience of all the people He said unto His disciples,** v. 46. **Beware of the scribes, which desire to walk in long robes, and love greetings in the markets, and the highest seats in the synagogs, and the chief rooms at feasts;** v. 47. **which devour widows' houses, and for a show make long prayers. The same shall receive greater damnation.** In the hearing of all the people Jesus sounded this warning against the scribes, for they all should know what the situation was. The scribes among the Pharisees were the most dangerous of them all, for they were teachers of the Law and should have been examples to all the people both in doctrine and life. Instead of which they were corrupters of the people in their teaching and hypocrites in their life. Cp. Mark 12, 38—40. They dearly loved to walk around in a grand manner. As a mark of distinction they wore their robes or mantles clear down to their feet. They were flattered if any one recognized them in public with the greeting of deference due to a person of higher station. In the synagogs they in-

variably chose the seats of honor, the place where the rulers of the synagog sat, facing the people. In the homes also, they made it a point to try for the highest place at the table, the position of honor next to the host. Morally rotten they were, for they offered to make intercession for the widows in their bereavement and pretended thus to advance their interests, while in reality their one interest was their own enrichment at the expense of the poor credulous women. Thus hypocrisy, pride, and covetousness are the outstanding traits in the character of the scribes. They themselves who, as teachers, should know better, will receive the greater damnation, greater than that of those who sin in ignorance. And all disciples of Christ of all times should beware of their oily presence, since nothing good can ever come of it.

Summary. *Jesus defends His authority, tells the parable of the wicked husbandmen with its application, eludes the craftiness of the Pharisees, rebukes the ignorance of the Sadducees, by a counter-question silences all opposition, and warns against the scribes.*

CHAPTER 21.

The Widow's Gift. Luke 21, 1—4.

V. 1. **And He looked up and saw the rich men casting their gifts into the treasury.** V. 2. **And He saw also a certain poor widow casting in thither two mites.** V. 3. **And He said, Of a truth I say unto you that this poor widow hath cast in more than they all;** v. 4. **for all these have of their abundance cast in unto the offerings of God; but she of her penury hath cast in all the living that she had.** Jesus had probably delivered His last discourse in the Court of Women, where there were situated the thirteen trumpet-shaped treasure-chests, or collection-boxes, of the Temple. Looking up now, He saw something which not only did not insult His holy eyes, but filled Him with joy. His looking was not a casual, momentary glance, but He scrutinized the people intently for some time, deliberately taking note of their coming and the size of their gifts. The rich people put in large gifts, which was an easy matter for them to do. Gifts of a comparatively large size represented no sacrifice for them. But then the Lord's attention was drawn to a widow, a miserably poor and needy woman. Going up to one of the chests, this woman deposited therein two mites. "Another coin, translated mite, is in Greek lepton, 'the small one,' or the 'bit.' It was two of these that the widow cast into the treasury. . . . Two of them equaled a quadrans. The mite was, then, of the value of ⅛ of a cent. It was doubtless the smallest coin in circulation." 98) This act of real love and sacrifice made a deep impression upon Christ. With warm feeling He told His disciples: Truly I say to you that this poor widow cast in more than all the others. The actual amount was, of course, much smaller than the gifts of the rich. But in proportion to the ability of the others her simple gift stood so far ahead of the rest that there was no comparison possible. The others had given of their superfluity: they did not even feel the giving of the amount they cast into the chest. But this widow might have been expected to beg rather than to be giving to the Temple treasury. And yet out of her want, when she was deprived of practically all her living, she had given her last quarter of a cent to the Lord, all that she had to sustain life. True love and real sacrifice are here exemplified, and this is the attitude in which all work for the Lord and all gifts for His kingdom should be given. Cp. Mark 12, 41—44.

98) Barton, *Archeology and the Bible*, 165.

The Destruction of Jerusalem and the End of the World. Luke 21, 5—38.

The beginning of the discourse: V. 5. **And as some spake of the Temple, how it was adorned with goodly stones and gifts, He said,** v. 6. **As for these things which ye behold, the days will come in the which there shall not be left one stone upon another that shall not be thrown down.** V. 7. **And they asked Him, saying, Master, but when shall these things be, and what sign will there be when these things shall come to pass?** The evening was drawing near, and Jesus was on the point of leaving the Temple for Bethany, where He lodged with friends. But while they were walking out through the courts, some of His disciples remarked in admiration on the Temple itself, on its various buildings, porticoes, halls, and chambers, and especially did they mention the beautiful stones, the huge marble monoliths, which formed the Corinthian columns, and the gifts that were consecrated to the Lord, the many articles of adornment which were so conspicuous throughout the Temple. Among the votive gifts of the Temple were some very costly ones, such as a table from King Ptolemy of Egypt, a chain from Herod Agrippa, a golden vine from Herod the Great, which made the Temple famous for its wealth as far as Rome. But Jesus told them: As to all these things which ye see, the enormous wealth, the gorgeous beauty of the Temple, the days will come in which not one stone will remain upon the other that would not be utterly cast down in the general destruction. It was an announcement which must have filled the disciples with the greatest consternation and surprise. They

may now have thought the matter over or discussed it among themselves for a part of the trip across the valley of the Kidron and up the slope of Mount Olivet. But when Jesus had then sat down opposite the city, where He and His disciples had a full view of the wonderful edifice, which, by Christ's word, was marked for destruction, some of the disciples approached Him with a double question. They wanted to know the precise time, and also to recognize the special tokens of the approaching catastrophe. In their question they connected the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple with the end of the world. And this is altogether in accordance with the prophecies which make the judgment upon Jerusalem the beginning and the introduction of the judgment of the world. Matt. 16, 27. 28; 1 Thess. 2, 16.

Tokens of the end: V. 8. **And He said, Take heed that ye be not deceived; for many shall come in My name, saying, I am Christ; and the time draweth near; go ye not therefore after them.** V. 9. **But when ye shall hear of wars and commotions, be not terrified; for these things must first come to pass; but the end is not by and by.** V. 10. **Then said He unto them, Nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom;** v. 11. **and great earthquakes shall be in divers places, and famines, and pestilences; and fearful sights and great signs shall there be from heaven.** It is a characteristic of prophecy that there is rarely an exact division of time according to human standards, for there is no time before the eternal, omniscient God. Whether things will happen a thousand years hence or within a few years does not influence the Lord's time. For all things before Him are happening and taking place in the great present. And so in this case the Lord speaks of the two impending catastrophes, the destruction of Jerusalem and the end of the world, in almost the same breath, connecting them in such a way that the signs foretelling the one must be taken in a measure to refer to the other also. The Lord's first warning is against deception. In the days before the calamity which wiped out Jerusalem, false Christs arose, and in the name of the true Christ, the Messiah, at that. Deceivers of that kind appeared often in the decades after Christ's ascension, and always did they find people willing to listen to them and to cast their fortunes with that of the fraudulent impersonator. Even so the false Christs and false prophets of our days are multiplying with great rapidity; in Eddyism, in Russellism, in Dowieism, and in scores of minor sects they arise to deceive the people of God. Their call and promise invariably is: Here is Christ; here is the full truth; the time is near. They have even, repeatedly, fixed the date of Christ's coming to Judgment. But the believers should pay no attention to them nor follow after them as their disciples, for they are deceivers. As in the days before the destruction of Jerusalem there were wars and uprisings throughout the Roman Empire, but especially in Palestine, so the terrible World War of these last days and the uprisings throughout the world are speaking a strong language to them that heed. As in those days people rose against people and kingdom against kingdom, making it necessary for the Roman legions to be on the move continually, so, while the world stands, neither the most rosy nor the most practical dreams of diplomats will succeed in eliminating war. At the very moment when they are shouting peace with a voice calculated to drown opposition, they are trying to hide the selfishness of their plans which will plunge the world into further wars. As there were great earthquakes in many parts of the world in those days, in Asia Minor, in Italy, in Syria, so the recent terrible catastrophes in Italy, in Alaska, in Java, in Central America have filled the world with horrified astonishment. As great famines and pestilences visited various countries, especially Palestine, in those days, so the pestilence which recently swept the world and even now baffles science in certain of its aspects, and so the famines that have been reported from large areas of Europe and Asia, are God's reminders of the end. As there were terrifying phenomena and fearful portents from heaven in those days, some of which are told by Josephus, so the science of astronomy is unable to account for many things out in the universe to-day and will be utterly helpless before the manifestations of the last great day.

Earlier signs: V. 12. **But before all these they shall lay their hands on you, and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogs and into prisons, being brought before kings and rulers for My name's sake.** V. 13. **And it shall turn to you for a testimony.** V. 14. **Settle it therefore in your hearts not to meditate before what ye shall answer;** v. 15. **for I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay nor resist.** V. 16. **And ye shall be betrayed both by parents, and brethren, and kinsfolks, and friends; and some of you shall they cause to be put to death.** V. 17. **And ye shall be hated of all men for My name's sake.** V. 18. **But there shall not an hair of your head perish.** V. 19. **In your patience possess ye your souls.** Here are some of the signs which concern the disciples of Christ in the interval between His ascension and the destruction of Jerusalem in particular, but which find their application to the treatment and fate of the believers of all times. The enemies would lay their hands upon them and persecute them, as was done to the apostles almost from the beginning, James being the first one out of their midst to suffer martyrdom; and Stephen had been stoned even before that. They would be delivered to the councils of the synagogs for

judgment, whose sentence would commit them to prison, as in the persecution in which the unconverted Paul was so active. They would use the legal machinery to have the confessors of Christ hauled before kings and rulers on account of the name of Christ which they confessed, Paul himself experiencing this several times, before Felix, before Festus, before Agrippa and Bernice, before Nero. The history of the early Church is full of stories which fully substantiate every word of the prophecy of the Lord. And that the hearts of the enemies of the Gospel to-day are no different than at that time has been shown during recent developments, where attacks were not directed against a language, but against the confession of faith. But Christ's comfort stands to-day as it did then. All these things turn out for a testimony in favor of the believers and the truth which they profess. Not only do they receive credit and honor for their fearless confession of Christ, but their testimony has the effect which the proclamation of the Word of God always has: it influences the hearts and minds of men. To His disciples the Lord therefore gave instructions not to premeditate, to work out carefully in advance, their apology or defense. The best and highest efforts of mere human wisdom and skill will avail nothing unless the Lord Himself opens the mouth of His confessors and believers and gives them the proper wisdom from on high. Jesus and His Spirit, the Spirit of the Father, they are the invincible allies of all true believers, with whose aid they can cheerfully take up the apparently unequal battle against the powers of darkness in the persons of the enemies and detractors of the pure Gospel. More than once, as the example of John and Peter, of Paul, of Polycarp, of Luther, and of others show, the enemies have not been able either to withstand or to contradict the testimony of the servants of Christ. All that make it their aim to oppose the preaching of the Gospel-truth may be overcome and silenced by a simple and unequivocal confession of the truth of the Gospel as it is contained in the Word of God. The disciples should therefore not be deterred or discouraged even by the fact that there will be dissension in families, that the bonds of both relationship and the nearest friendship will be torn asunder by questions concerning the Gospel. Parents, brothers and sisters, near relatives, friends: they all will forget the duties and obligations of their station in their hatred of the Word of Salvation; they will deliver the Christians into the hands of their enemies, and in some cases they will not rest until they have caused them to be put to death. The believers will, in fact, be continually hated of all men on account of their confession of Christ's name. This is the cross of the Christians, the prospect which they must face. There is neither compromise nor mitigation. And yet, in the midst of these prophecies which might well make the stoutest heart quail, the Lord promises His disciples that not a hair of their heads should perish without His will, Matt. 10, 30. So long as the Christians are necessary for the service of the Lord, their bodies are inviolable, the enemies dare not touch them. They may, therefore, in their patience possess their souls. By faithful perseverance, by undaunted continuance in the confession of Christ's Word and doctrine, they will preserve their souls. Even if they should lose the life of their mortal body, they will save their true life, that of the soul, by such faithfulness to the end. Their soul, and the eternal life of their soul, will then be for them a glorious prize or treasure, which they will carry off for eternal enjoyment in heaven.

A special prophecy concerning Jerusalem: V. 20. **And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh.** V. 21. **Then let them which are in Judea flee to the mountains; and let them which are in the midst of it depart out; and let not them that are in the countries enter thereinto.** V. 22. **For these be the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled.** V. 23. **But woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck, in those days! For there shall be great distress in the land and wrath upon this people.** V. 24. **And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations; and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.** Here is valuable advice for the Christians of Judea at the time of the great catastrophe, which they should heed and follow to the letter. The armies of the Romans would surround the city, coming upon her from all sides. And this should be the final point of time for the believers to escape out of the city, since this would be at least one of the manifestations of the abomination of desolation. Cp. Matt. 24, 15—21; Mark 13, 14—19. The fact of the presence of the armies in the act of surrounding the city would be the last definite sign of her desolation and destruction, including the ruin of the Temple. At that time those that were in Judea, the believers that lived in this country, should flee to the mountains, for flight was the only means of their deliverance. In the hiding-places of the mountains, in the insignificant villages that were hidden away far from the beaten paths, there would be an opportunity for saving their lives. For those that were in the city of Jerusalem precipitate flight would also be a necessity; for they should not depend upon the strength of its walls or defenses. Those people also that lived in the suburban district or within easy reach of the capital should not be tempted to take refuge within the city to escape the invaders. For such precautions would prove utterly use-

less in this emergency. For the days that the Lord refers to are the days of vengeance of the Judge of the world. The many warnings that had been sounded by the prophets of old, the repeated admonitions by the preachers of righteousness, had not been heeded, and so the vial of the wrath of God would be poured out in full measure. The stamp of divine retribution was impressed upon the fate of Jerusalem and the Temple, even for heathen eyes. It was a case of the mill's grinding slowly, but with such terrible thoroughness that not one guilty one escaped. But alas for those that are about to become or have just become mothers! Bitterly the Lord laments their fate, for their condition at that time will not provoke compassion, neither on the part of their friends that might help them to escape, nor on that of the enemies, for they would destroy without mercy. Distress in great measure would be upon the whole land, since everything suffers under the ravages of an invasion; but the wrath of God would strike the people without mercy. His patience was exhausted, and the full bitterness of His just sentence would be carried out upon a foolish and gainsaying generation. The Lord tells exactly how the wrath of God would be manifested. Some of them would fall by the edge, literally, by the mouth of the sword, which would pounce upon them to devour them. Others would be led into captivity among all nations, for a reproach and shame to them until the end of time. According to the account of Josephus, over a million Jews were slaughtered during the siege of Jerusalem and after its fall, and 97,000 were dragged into the provinces as prisoners, mainly into Egypt and Italy. It was a judgment of God without parallel in the history of the world. And Jerusalem, the glory of Israel, was occupied by Gentiles at that time, and has been trodden under foot by strangers to this day. And this will remain so until the times of the Gentiles have been fulfilled, until the full number of the elect from the great mass of the heathen has been gained, until the end of time. The Zionist movement of our days is not taken seriously even by the Jews themselves. The Word of God must stand true. Note: The destruction of Jerusalem by the Gentiles is a type of the attempted destruction of the Church of God by the Antichrist. The Antichrist, the Roman Catholic Pope, has been revealed. He has rendered desolate the temple of God, the Church of Christ, by abrogating true worship, by establishing various kinds of idolatry, by filling the Church with many abominations and offenses, and by shedding the blood of thousands of confessors of Christ. But he has now been set forth in his true colors; the Church has been purged of his errors by the work of the great Reformer, Martin Luther.

Signs which will accompany the coming of Christ: V. 25. **And there shall be signs in the sun and in the moon and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring;** v. 26. **men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth; for the powers of heaven shall be shaken.** V. 27. **And then shall they see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.** Here some of the signs that will usher in the great Day of Judgment are enumerated. The laws of nature, which have been fixed by the Creator, will be repealed, and in consequence the universe will dissolve in chaos. Unusual, unheard-of signs will take place in sun, moon, and stars, not those of the regular eclipses or similar phenomena which are governed by fixed laws, but such as will cause fearful consternation from the start, and oppressive distress experienced by the people of the world, together with a helpless perplexity, caused in part also by the noise and billows of the sea. So indescribably dreadful will be the dissolution of the bonds that hold the universe together that the hearts of men will fail them, will be taken out of their bodies for fear and for expectation of the things that are coming and are threatening to engulf the world; for the very powers of the heavens that hold the machinery of the vast sky in place will be moved and shaken. And then, in the midst of all this turmoil, while the cataclysmic disturbances are tossing the world and the entire universe about in utter helplessness, then they, all men, will see the Son of Man, the great Judge of the earth, coming in a cloud, with power and great glory. The despised and rejected, the meek and humble Prophet of Galilee will then have stripped off all evidences of the former humiliation, and all men will be forced to recognize Him as the Lord of all.

The comfort of the believers: V. 28. **And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh.** V. 29. **And He spake to them a parable: Behold the fig-tree and all the trees;** v. 30. **when they now shoot forth, ye see and know of your own selves that summer is now nigh at hand.** V. 31. **So likewise ye, when ye see these things come to pass, know ye that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand.** V. 32. **Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass away till all be fulfilled.** V. 33. **Heaven and earth shall pass away; but My words shall not pass away.** When there is a beginning of all these things, when these tokens begin to be fulfilled. The events upon which the children of the world will gaze with helpless terror should be for the believers a voice awakening in their hearts the most joyful hope and expectation. The heads which have so often been bowed under all manner of misery and persecution should now be lifted up in happy anticipation of the final, glorious deliverance. This admonition Jesus tries to im-

press by means of a parable. No matter what tree may be chosen for an example, for instance, the fig-tree, the same truth holds good of all of them. When they put forth their leaves, all ordinary people that are acquainted with trees at all immediately know, without further demonstration, that summer must be near. In the same way the believers, seeing these signs which are to precede the coming of Christ to judgment fulfilled, conclude and know at once that the kingdom of God is near, that the final revelation of the Church of Christ in the glories of heaven will take place, that the believers in Him will enter, from the trials and tribulations of the Church Militant into the everlasting bliss of the Church Triumphant. "Therefore let us also learn this art and new language and become accustomed to it, that we may be able to picture these signs before us in such a comforting way, and look upon them and judge them according to the Word. For if we follow our reason and wisdom, we can do nothing but become terrified and flee before them. For our reason does not like to see things appear dark and unpleasant, that it lightens and thunders, that it roars and is noisy, as though everything would be turned topsy-turvy. But a Christian should pay no attention to that, but take hold of the Word, with which He wants to open our eyes and explain how He means it, as though we were approaching the beautiful summer-time, and as though there were nothing but beautiful roses and lilies that bloom to delight the eye, and that nothing but joy and delight will come after this abominably evil way and misfortune in which we now are." 99) And He gives them a further sign, namely, that this generation, the race of the Jews, will not pass away, will not lose its identity as a separate race, but retain its characteristics among the nations and in their very midst, in spite of all persecutions, until the end of time, until the great Day of Judgment. And so far as the whole discourse is concerned, with its threats and warnings, as well as with its comforting promises, it is true what the Lord claims for His Word as a whole: Heaven and earth will pass away rather than that a single word of the Lord remain unfulfilled or fall to the ground. In the midst of the return of primeval chaos, in the midst of the destruction of worlds and the very universe itself, the Word of the Lord will stand in eternity as a rock of trust and confidence for all believers.

A final warning: V. 34. **And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares.** V. 35. **For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth.** V. 36. **Watch ye therefore and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man.** V. 37. **And in the daytime He was teaching in the Temple; and at night He went out, and abode in the mount that is called the Mount of Olives.** V. 38. **And all the people came early in the morning to Him in the Temple for to hear Him.** It is not an easy matter to remain steadfast in the Word and faith under the conditions as pictured here by Christ; in fact, no person could hope to stand firm and brave all dangers to the end. But by following the Lord's admonition here given, the impossible becomes possible, and we shall be able to stand against all our enemies and against all the temptations of the latter days. We should take heed, watch ourselves very carefully, not permit our flesh and its lusts to gain the ascendancy. We should not weigh down our hearts with the burden of gluttony and drunkenness, for this causes headache and stupidity, and makes the Christian unfit for the battle with the powers of darkness. His heart and mind must be clear as a bell at all times, in order that he may recognize the dangers described in Scriptures and fight them with the weapons suggested by the Lord. But just as dangerous for true Christian watchfulness are the cares of this life, the anxiety and concern for the future which always threatens to fill our hearts and to drive out all trust in the Lord and His gracious providence. Where care becomes supreme, there faith cannot exist, but is invariably suffocated. With such a lack of proper preparation, the coming of the last day will prove a calamity and will catch even those that professed Christianity unawares. For just as a snare falls down over the head of the unsuspecting animal that is not ever on the alert for signs of danger, so will the day of the Lord come upon all those that dwell upon the face of the earth. And therefore the Lord once more, in conclusion, urges watchfulness, tireless vigilance at all times, with unceasing prayer to the Lord, in order that the Christians may be enabled to escape from all the terrible punishments that await the unbelievers and scoffers, and to stand before the Son of Man on that last great day with cheerful trust. This is not a matter of individual worthiness, but of being declared worthy through the blood and merits of Jesus Christ the Savior. "For the godless and unbelievers He will come as a Judge and punish them as His own enemies and those of His Christians. But for the believers and Christians He will come as their Savior. This we should firmly believe and joyfully look forward to His advent, and see to it that we, when He comes, as St. Peter says, be found in faith and holy life and in peace, without spot, and blameless before Him." 100) Luke adds a final note as to the way in which Jesus spent His last days. All day long He was

99) Luther, 7, 1498.

100) Luther, 13b, 1385.

teaching in the Temple, but night after night He went out and lodged in Bethany, which was on the southeastern slope of Mount Olivet. There was no need of His sleeping in the open air, as some commentators think, for He had His friends in Bethany, but a short distance from the city. However, in the morning He was always in the city betimes; not too soon, however, for the people, for they surged to Him early in the morning, earnestly desiring to hear the Word of Grace from His lips. Note: Many a Christian of our days might learn a lesson from these people that got up unusually early and thronged to the Temple to hear the Lord, whereas many in our days act as though they were conferring a favor upon the Lord by appearing at His house some half hour after service has begun.

Summary. *Jesus commends the poor widow for her love in giving her last mite to the Lord, and gives a long discourse on the destruction of Jerusalem and the end of the world, with warnings and admonitions that are in full force in our days.*

CHAPTER 22.

The Preparation for, and the Celebration of, the Passover. Luke 22, 1—23.

The Jewish leaders and Judas: V. 1. **Now the Feast of Unleavened Bread drew nigh, which is called the Passover.** V. 2. **And the chief priests and scribes sought how they might kill Him; for they feared the people.** V. 3. **Then entered Satan into Judas, surnamed Iscariot, being of the number of the Twelve.** V. 4. **And he went his way, and communed with the chief priests and captains how he might betray Him unto them.** V. 5. **And they were glad, and covenanted to give him money.** V. 6. **And he promised, and sought opportunity to betray Him unto them in the absence of the multitude.** Originally, the day of the Passover proper had been distinguished from the Days of Unleavened Bread, but in the course of time the names were used without discrimination, the entire 14th of Nisan being reckoned with the Feast of Unleavened Bread. The Passover merged into the festival following, and the two were regarded as one. This festival was now at hand; for its celebration the pilgrims had been thronging to Jerusalem for some time past. With every day the hatred of the chief priests and scribes against Jesus had increased. On Tuesday they would gladly have laid murderous hands upon Him, being detained only by their fear of the people. And by Wednesday morning they had determined that He must be put out of the way, that He must die. Yet their fear of the people, who were hanging upon every word that Jesus uttered, restrained them from open acts of violence. They concluded that it would be best not to take the last decisive step before the feast, but to seize the first favorable opportunity afterwards, after the majority or all of the pilgrims would have returned to their homes. Cp. Mark 14, 2; Matt. 26, 5. In the mean time they received the promise of assistance from an unexpected quarter. For Satan had entered into Judas, who was called Iscariot. Although this man was one of the Twelve, he had opened his heart to the love of money, he had given way to covetousness, he had become a thief, he had rejected all the earnest admonitions which the Lord had addressed to him during the last days. So fully had the devil of avarice taken possession of his heart that he deliberately went away from the rest and had a conference with the chief priests and the leaders, the heads of the Temple watches. He entered into negotiations with them, haggling with them after the fashion of the avaricious. About the manner of the betrayal he was fairly certain, needing only the time and the place. But to Judas the chief incentive and reward was the most important point. Even in their joy over the probable early success of their schemes the chief priests did not overlook the weakness of covetousness. They held out before him, as the price of the betrayal, the silver, the usual price of a slave. And so Judas bound himself to these enemies of his Lord with his promise, and from that hour watched every opportunity for a good chance to deliver Christ to them without the people, at a time and under circumstances when there would be no danger of interference on the part of the pilgrim crowds. Note: Judas is a type of many a Christian that permits the devil to take hold of his heart to fill it with covetousness. It is a sad and miserable price for which many confessors of Jesus have betrayed their Lord, a better-paying position, greater honor before men, — the evanescent and ephemeral favor of the world. Woe unto those that follow Judas!

The preparations for the Passover meal: V. 7. **Then came the Day of Unleavened Bread, when the Passover must be killed.** V. 8. **And He sent Peter and John, saying, Go and prepare us the Passover that we may eat.** V. 9. **And they said unto Him, Where wilt Thou that we prepare?** V. 10. **And He said unto them, Behold, when ye are entered into the city, there shall a man meet you bearing a pitcher of water; follow him into the house where he goeth in.** V. 11. **And ye shall say unto the goodman of the house, The Master saith unto thee, Where is the guest-chamber where I shall eat the Passover with My disciples?** V. 12. **And he shall show you a large upper room**

furnished; there make ready. It had been the custom of the Lord, as a member of the Jewish Church, to celebrate the Passover regularly. When therefore the day came, on the evening of which the Passover meal was held, the disciples came to Jesus with the question whether they should do as they were accustomed to do in the years gone by. Jesus commissioned two of His disciples, Peter and John, to act as His representatives in preparing everything for the meal to be held on that Thursday evening. Upon their inquiry as to the place where they should prepare, He gave them explicit directions. Cp. Matt. 26, 17—19; Mark 14, 12—16. Coming into the city from Bethany, very likely through the Sheep Gate, they would meet a man coming toward them bearing a vessel, a jug, or pitcher, of water; him they should follow to the house into which he would enter. To the master of that house they should make known their wants, asking him for the location of the guest-chamber, the dining-room, where He might eat the Passover-meal with His disciples. The man would thereupon show them an upper room, a flight of stairs up, all furnished with sofas and pillows for such a meal; there they should prepare. The owner of this house is generally assumed to have been a friend, a believer, a disciple of Jesus. Both the authority of Jesus and His divine omniscience are here brought out.

The Passover meal: V. 13. **And they went and found as He had said unto them; and they made ready the Passover.** V. 14. **And when the hour was come, He sat down, and the twelve apostles with Him.** V. 15. **And He said unto them, With desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer;** v. 16. **for I say unto you, I will not any more eat thereof until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God.** V. 17. **And He took the cup, and gave thanks, and said, Take this, and divide it among yourselves;** v. 18. **for I say unto you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God shall come.** Just as Jesus had told them by His divine omniscience, the disciples found everything, and so could prepare the food for the Passover meal. They bought a lamb whose condition complied with the requirements of the Law. After the close of the evening service they took it up to the Temple, where all the priests were on duty. The man who represented the household slaughtered the animal himself, while a priest caught the blood and passed it on to be sprinkled against the altar of burnt offering. All the ceremonies of the Temple were carried on during the singing of the great Hallel. The two disciples then provided also the necessary unleavened bread, the bitter herbs, and the reddish-brown sauce known as *charoseth*, which was to remind the people of the bricks of Egypt. Having gotten everything in order, they either returned to Bethany, or, more probably, waited for the rest of the company to come, thus making a total number of twelve apostles, to which number must be added Jesus Himself. He, the Lord, had prepared everything for His suffering and death. The evil counsel of the Jews would never have been successful if He had not agreed thereto. Not the time that they had deemed expedient, but the day that He had chosen would bring His death. At the appointed hour in the evening, the time when the Passover meal was eaten according to Jewish custom, Jesus took His position on the sofa, He reclined at the table after the Oriental custom which had been accepted by the Jews, and His disciples, the twelve apostles, with Him. His very first words showed that He was deeply moved. He had desired most earnestly, He had longed with a great longing, to eat this Passover meal with them before His great Passion. For He would celebrate no more festival meals with them until the perfection of the kingdom of God would be attained. He then spoke the customary blessing upon the cup of wine, which was drunk by all the partakers of the meal, and gave it to them with the instruction that they should pass it along and all partake of it, that they should divide it among themselves. And here He declared just as solemnly that He would not drink with them of the fruit of the vine, as the Passover wine was called, until the kingdom of God would come, until the revelation of the Kingdom of Glory, when the Church Triumphant will enter upon its eternal feast. The Passover meal, which the Jews celebrated in commemoration of the deliverance from the bondage of Egypt, incidentally was a type of the eternal meal of joy and bliss in heaven, where the Lord will feed them that are His with heavenly manna and have them drink of the river of His pleasures. Christ, as the true Passover Lamb, was now about to be brought to the slaughter and thereby gain for all sinners the joys of eternal life. For that reason He had the great longing to eat this Passover meal with His disciples, because it introduces His suffering and death. As the Savior of sinners He was consumed with eagerness to earn salvation for all sinners. Cp. Matt. 26, 29; Mark 14, 25.

The institution of the Lord's Supper: V. 19. **And He took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, This is My body, which is given for you; this do in remembrance of Me.** V. 20. **Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new testament in My blood, which is shed for you.** The meal proper was drawing to a close. The Lord had fulfilled the obligations and responsibilities of the old law and its worship. He had observed the sacrament of the Old Testament for the last time. But now Jesus instituted a new and wonderful meal, in which the glorious fruit of His suffering was bequeathed to His disciples and all believers of the New Testament. While they were still at the table, the Lord took some of the bread which

had remained, consecrated it with a prayer of thanksgiving, broke it, and gave it to them with the words: This is My body, which is given for you; this do for My remembrance. In going from one to the other, He varied the formula, but the content, the substance of His words, remained the same. Then He took the cup, very likely the third cup of the Passover meal, the cup of thanksgiving, saying: This cup is the new covenant, or testament, in My blood, which is shed for you. In and through the blood of the Savior the New Testament is established. He has removed the wall of separation between the holy, righteous God and the sinful world by the shedding of His blood, and wants to give the glorious benefits of His atonement to all that believe on Him, in the Sacrament. Through the eating and drinking of His body and blood the forgiveness of sins is assured, sealed to the believers. We Christians believe and confess that the Sacrament of the Altar is the true body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, under the bread and wine, for us Christians to eat and to drink, instituted by Christ Himself. Our reason indeed cannot understand how the miracle is possible; it is inclined to believe either in the transubstantiation of the Catholics, according to which the bread and wine are changed into the body and blood of Christ, or in the reasonable explanation of the Reformed churches, according to which the body and blood of Christ are not at all present, but are merely pictured symbolically. But the words of Christ are clear and true, and we know from Scriptures that the body of Christ, the vessel of His deity, even in the days of His humiliation, in addition to the circumscribed existence, had a higher, supersensual being, John 3, 13, and that the exalted Christ, who has ascended to the right hand of God, is not confined to one certain place in heaven, but as the God-man has the fulness that filleth all in all, Eph. 1, 23. Therefore we take our reason captive under the obedience of Christ and do not rack our brains over the difficulty, but rather thank the Lord for the blessing of this Sacrament, out of which we gain ever again the certainty of the forgiveness of sins.

The traitor at the table: V. 21. **But, behold, the hand of him that betrayeth Me is with Me on the table.** V. 22. **And truly the Son of Man goeth as it was determined; but woe unto the man by whom He is betrayed!** V. 23. **And they began to enquire among themselves which of them it was that should do this thing.** Cp. Matt. 26, 21—25; Mark 14, 18—21. Jesus had just established and instituted the meal of His grace and kindness and salvation. But during all this time His betrayer also had his hand on the same table, the traitor had the effrontery to keep his position in the midst of the Twelve, known, in his boundless depravity, to the Lord alone. Even now the Lord gives him a warning; solemn, searching. The course of the Son of Man, the way in which He should fulfil the eternal counsel of God, had been arranged in all details: He must carry out this plan to its fulfilment. But it would be a sorry day and hour for him that was guilty of the terrible sin of the betrayal, of this basest, most heinous sin. Judas had better take another thought before it would be too late! The other disciples, indeed, were now filled with consternation and horror. They began earnestly to inquire and to search for him in their midst that would commit, that had determined within himself to perpetrate this unholy deed. Only Judas was so filled with Satan's wiles and power that it made little or no impression upon him. He may have thought that the Lord would have no difficulty in gaining His liberty, even if He should be in the hands of His enemies. That is a blindness, a hardening of the heart that plunges into everlasting damnation.

A Lesson on Humility. Luke 22, 24—30.

The dispute about rank: V. 24. **And there was also a strife among them which of them should be accounted the greatest.** V. 25. **And He said unto them, The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them, and they that exercise authority upon them are called benefactors.** V. 26. **But ye shall not be so; but he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve.** V. 27. **For whether is greater, he that sitteth at meat, or he that serveth? Is not he that sitteth at meat? But I am among you as he that serveth.** V. 28. **Ye are they which have continued with Me in My temptations.** V. 29. **And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as My Father hath appointed unto Me,** v. 30. **that ye may eat and drink at My table in My kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.** Jesus had just told the apostles, in connection with the announcement of His betrayer, that He was going away, and they had begun a conversation upon the subject of the possible betrayer, incidentally, however, taking reference to a possible successor in the place of the Master. And before they were aware of it, they were in the midst of an altercation, a contention, a spirited debate as to who of them made the impression of being the greatest. Cp. chap. 9, 46. The thoughts of the disciples were evidently linked very firmly to this life; it was impossible for them to realize the situation as it really was. So Jesus again, with His infinite patience, gave them a lesson on humility, by referring once more to the great paradox of the kingdom of God. It is true, of course, that the kings of the heathen lord it over them, and that those that exert their authority over them are called their benefactors. Such conditions obtain in the governments of this world. But there is a big difference in the method of handling matters and

doing work in the countries of the world, in the State, and that of ruling the Church. Emphatically Jesus says: You, however, not so. The greatest among them, the one upon whom the honor might naturally fall, should become so that he does not want to rank above the youngest, and the leader should distinguish himself by the humblest service. To become more humble from day to day they should regard as an elevation, and love active in service as the sum of their greatness. The Lord exemplifies this by a reference to Himself. If one of two persons is reclining at the table in the enjoyment of the meal, and the other is performing the work of a servant in washing his feet or in waiting upon his wants, the former is the greater. And Jesus, by the act of washing the disciples' feet, had humbled Himself to do the lowest service for them. This fact, however, in no way changed the actual condition of things, namely, that He was the greatest among them; His action, in fact, established His position as their superior. Now, after having taught His disciples true humility, He also gives them the comforting, cheering news of their future elevation. They had, at least in part, shared His lowliness, they had persistently adhered to Him in the midst of all His persecutions, when Satan and His enemies among the Jews had tried constantly to turn Him from the path of duty. Jesus here formally made a contract with them, notified them of their appointment, even as His Father had appointed to Him the Kingdom. This disposition the Lord now transmits to His apostles, solemnly making them heirs of the blessings which had been His by the fact of His eternal Sonship. They should eat and drink at His table in His kingdom, they should be partakers of all His glory. And He confers upon them the added honor that they should sit as judges with Him, occupying thrones and judging the twelve tribes of Israel, the sum total of all the believers, the true children of the Kingdom. It will be the pleasure and the honor of the apostles to welcome into the eternal kingdom and to transmit to the believers that have been faithful to the end the joyful announcement of everlasting freedom. Cp. Matt. 19, 28.

The Walk to Gethsemane and the Agony.

Luke 22, 31—53.

The warning to Simon: V. 31. **And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you that he may sift you as wheat;** v. 32. **but I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not. And when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren.** V. 33. **And he said unto Him, Lord, I am ready to go with Thee both into prison and to death.** V. 34. **And He said, I tell thee, Peter, the cock shall not crow this day before that thou shalt thrice deny that thou knowest Me.** Jesus had now left the upper room of the supper and was probably on His way to Gethsemane with His disciples. On the way a conversation was begun, in the course of which the Lord gave Peter this emphatic warning. Twice He calls him Simon, his former name, to indicate even in that way the seriousness of the situation. He puts all the affection of His Savior's love and yet enough distress into His tone to make Peter feel the solemnity. Satan had eagerly and earnestly sought them all; he was not satisfied with Judas, but desired other conquests. Even as the wheat, after the first treading out, was winnowed and then shaken in a sieve, to separate the grain from the chaff, just as in the modern fanning-machine, so Satan would take hold of the disciples to sift them by means of afflictions and various temptations. He would make use of God's permission to the very limit. The Passion of the Lord would bring trial, fear, and terror also upon them, and then the devil would make every attempt to take their faith out of their hearts. All disciples of Christ should remember that in days of trouble and distress their adversary, the devil, will take advantage of the fact and will attempt to devour them. And just in the case of Simon the devil succeeded; for a very little while he conquered. But the Lord adds at once that He has made him the special object of earnest prayer, in order that his faith, which he would lose in the denial, would not be taken away, would not be lost, permanently. But when Peter has then turned from his great sin, he should strengthen his brethren, the other disciples, making them firm in faith and love. Peter, with his usual impetuous rashness, would not have the words of the Master true; he simply would not admit that he, who had received such evidences of the Savior's love and felt himself so secure, should prove unfaithful. He assured Jesus: Lord, with Thee ready am I to go even into prison and into death. He protested his readiness repeatedly, foolishly depending upon his own strength. But Jesus told him, in turn, that the cock would not crow, the regular time of cock-crowing would not come, Mark 13, 35, before he had denied his Master three times. And his denial would be an absolute one, a declining of even personal knowledge of Him. But Peter did not heed the warning. If any Christian depends upon his own strength and ability, he is on the surest way to deny his Savior. Only by constant humility and ceaseless, trustful prayer for the sustaining strength of God can one hope to remain faithful to the end.

The seriousness of the coming danger: V. 35. **And He said unto them, When I sent you without purse, and scrip, and shoes, lacked ye anything? And they said, Nothing.** V. 36. **Then said He unto them, But now, he that hath a purse, let him take it, and likewise his scrip; and he that hath no sword, let him sell his garment and buy one.** V. 37. **For I say unto you that this that is written must yet be accomplished**

in Me, And He was reckoned among the transgressors; for the things concerning Me have an end. V. 38. **And they said, Lord, behold, here are two swords. And He said unto them, It is enough.** This section is not a digression, but has a very close connection with the foregoing. It was on account of the constant watchfulness and solicitude of the Lord that His disciples had been protected so well; and it was probably just for this reason that Peter had grown so overconfident. About this faithfulness and loving care He now asks the apostles, whether, on any of their trips, when He had sent them off without purse and beggar's collecting sack and heavy sandals, they had ever been in want of anything. Upon which they answered, in all truthfulness, that they had never lacked anything. He had taken care of them at all times, and their trust had not been in vain. Note: The care of the Lord accompanies His servants even to-day, sustaining and upholding them amidst the difficulties of their work: a promise full of consolation and comfort. But now the Lord frankly tells His disciples that in the future His physical presence and care would no longer accompany them; they would have to learn to shift for themselves. This the Lord says to them in figurative language, telling them that he who had a purse should be sure to take it, also he that had a beggar's sack; and as for a sword, they might find it to their advantage to sell their upper garment, however indispensable this might seem, in order to buy one. The disciples, after the removal of their Lord, would not find the same kind reception as before; they would have to care for their means of livelihood; they would have to expect bitter enmity. Days of want, trouble, and severe trials and battles were coming, and they should be prepared for them. As for Him, He is under obligation to the eternal plan of God for the salvation of men. In Him the word of Isaiah, 53, 12, would be fulfilled, as well as all the other prophecies. His life and work, His death and resurrection, represent the end of Old Testament prophecy; His fate is fixed beyond recall. The disciples, as usual, did not grasp the real meaning of Jesus, but were under the impression that He was referring to physical fighting. So they showed Him two swords which they had procured in some way or had kept from former years. His only remark upon this was: It is enough. It sounds weary and spiritless, almost disgusted over the lack of understanding shown even now. "For the end I have in view more than enough; but also enough of misunderstanding, disenchantment, speech, teaching, and life generally."

The agony in Gethsemane: V. 39. **And He came out and went, as He was wont, to the Mount of Olives; and His disciples also followed Him.** V. 40. **And when He was at the place, He said unto them, Pray that ye enter not into temptation.** V. 41. **And He was withdrawn from them about a stone's cast, and kneeled down and prayed,** v. 42. **saying, Father, if Thou be willing, remove this cup from Me; nevertheless not My will, but Thine, be done.** V. 43. **And there appeared an angel unto Him from heaven, strengthening Him.** V. 44. **And being in an agony He prayed more earnestly; and His sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground.** V. 45. **And when He rose up from prayer and was come to His disciples, He found them sleeping for sorrow,** v. 46. **and said unto them, Why sleep ye? Rise and pray, lest ye enter into temptation.** Jesus had the habit of going over to Mount Olivet often, to a certain garden called Gethsemane, the place of the oil-press, and on this fine moonlight night, when only the depths of the Kidron Valley were in shadow, He could very profitably spend a few hours in prayer. His disciples, therefore, saw nothing strange in His action, but followed Him as usual. It is probable that they did not even think it strange when He chose three of their number as His companions for a walk into the farther recesses of the garden, for that also had happened before. But Jesus did all this with full understanding of all that was going to happen. To His closest friends He said, in the interior of the garden, that they should pray in order not to enter into temptation. Satan was even then gathering his forces, marshaling all the forces of darkness to make one last attempt against the work of atonement. The fear of death had fallen upon the Lord, of temporal, spiritual, and eternal death. His terror became greater with every moment. He withdrew, He tore Himself away from His three disciples in the intensity of His soul's suffering, to a distance of about a stone's throw; He threw Himself down upon His knees in an imploring attitude; He begged and pleaded with His heavenly Father: If Thou wilt, take away this cup, let it pass away on one side of Me. That bitter cup which was now held out to Him, the prospect of the cruel tortures on the cross and of the death for the sins of the whole world, that seemed too much for Him at this time. Jesus was a true, natural man, and human nature resists and struggles against death, for death is unnatural; it destroys the life which God has given, it tears apart the band between body and soul. The humiliation of Jesus is so great that He thinks it possible to find another way to work the redemption of the world. The very counsel of God which drove Him down from His throne of glory into this vale of tears was darkened before His eyes in this hour. What a depth of humiliation! And yet, there was not the slightest murmuring against the decree of God. Always the will of God was to be carried out first. He sacrificed His will to that of His heavenly Father. In suffering He learned obedience, and He practised submission, becoming

obedient unto death, Heb. 5, 8; Phil. 2, 8. At this climax of His suffering an angel from heaven appeared to Him and offered Him strength, probably by reminding Him of the eternal plan of God and of the final result of His way of suffering. So unutterably deep was the humiliation of the Son of God that He, the great Creator of the universe, accepted assistance and encouragement from one of His own creatures. He was then at the height of His great fear; the words of His prayer poured forth with great vehemence. Of this battle that of the patriarch Jacob at Jabbok had been but a faint type. Finally His sweat became like large drops of blood, which ran down His holy face and fell to the ground. It was the misery and fervor of His soul, glowing in the unbearable heat of this tribulation, that caused this phenomenon. But gradually His strength prevailed, gradually the attacks of death and the devil lost in intensity. And finally He had overcome all His weakness: He was ready to take the cup out of the hand of His heavenly Father and to drain it to the last dregs. He arose from His long battle of prayer; but when He came to His disciples, He found them sleeping for sorrow. Mere flesh and blood had not been able even to witness the scene of such harrowing agony. He awakened them from their sleep, with some degree of sadness over Peter's inability to watch with Him for even one hour. He told them that this was no time to sleep. They should rather arise and pray, lest they enter into temptation. In the hours of great and bitter misfortune above all it is necessary to be ever on the alert, to practise all vigilance, to ask God for strength and submission to His will, in order that no temptation prove too strong or rob us of our faith. The spirit of the Christians may be willing enough, for that is born out of God, but the flesh, the inherited depravity and sinfulness, is too weak and helpless. Only persistent, importunate prayer will receive from the Spirit of God the strength to overcome and obtain the victory.

The betrayal: V. 47. **And while He yet spake, behold a multitude, and he that was called Judas, one of the Twelve, went before them, and drew near unto Jesus to kiss Him.** V. 48. **But Jesus said unto him, Judas, betrayest thou the Son of Man with a kiss?** V. 49 **When they which were about Him saw what would follow, they said unto Him, Lord, shall we smite with the sword?** V. 50. **And one of them smote the servant of the high priest, and cut off his right ear.** V. 51. **And Jesus answered and said, Suffer ye thus far. And He touched his ear, and healed him.** V. 52. **Then Jesus said unto the chief priests and captains of the Temple and the elders which were come to Him, Be ye come out, as against a thief, with swords and staves?** V. 53. **When I was daily with you in the Temple, ye stretched forth no hands against Me; but this is your hour and the power of darkness.** While Jesus was still speaking, He had probably moved down to the entrance of the garden, there to be joined by the eight disciples whom He had left near the road. And about at this point He met the rabble of servants of the high priests and Temple guards and some few soldiers, with a sprinkling of captains of the Temple and the chief priests. Judas, one of the Twelve, was with them, as their leader. "With this name, as with a branding-iron, Judas is designated even unto the end." With revolting hypocrisy he came near to Jesus to kiss Him, and thus to betray Him to His murderers with the token of respect and love. Jesus indicated the full contempt and disgust for this shameful act in the reproving words, which yet seem to contain a pleading tone, as of the Savior that will try even now yet to coax the sinner back to the way of righteousness: With a kiss thou betrayest the Son of Man? About this time, the spectacle also excited the disciples, especially Peter. They were becoming apprehensive for the safety of their beloved Master and, in their misunderstanding of His words, thought that this was a time when swords would stand them in good stead. No sooner had they called out than their anger overpowered them. One sword flashed and descended, cutting off the right ear of the high priest's servant. That was carnal zeal; the Lord was not in need of such defense. The weapons of His warfare are not carnal, but spiritual. Jesus therefore immediately called His disciples to order by saying: Cease, it is enough! Let the enemies proceed; make no resistance; for only in this way are the Scriptures to be fulfilled. And touching the ear of the servant, He healed him: an affecting bit of kindness to the enemy at the height of a crisis, and one which probably saved the disciples from sudden death. But then the Lord turned to the leaders of the crowd that had come to apprehend Him, the chief priests and the captains of the Temple and the elders, and censured their action with words of bitter reproach. As against a thief or robber they had come out, with swords and clubs; and yet He had been in their midst in the Temple every day, and not once had they extended their hands to take Him. Their behavior savored of a bad conscience and was altogether unworthy of the leaders of the people. If all had been open and above board, they could have made an open case against Him and taken Him in charge in the proper way. But now was their hour, the time when the enemies were apparently victorious; and it was the power of darkness that was actuating them. They were in the employ of the prince of darkness. It was Satan that was carrying out his murderous intention against the Lord. And God permitted the wickedness of men and of the devil to have free rein for the present, but only for one purpose, namely, that the Scriptures might be fulfilled.

Christ before Caiaphas. The Denial of Peter. Luke 22, 54—71.

The fall of Peter: V. 54. **Then took they Him, and led Him, and brought Him into the high priest's house. And Peter followed afar off.** V. 55. **And when they had kindled a fire in the midst of the hall, and were set down together, Peter sat down among them.** V. 56. **But a certain maid beheld him as he sat by the fire, and earnestly looked upon him, and said, This man was also with Him.** V. 57. **And he denied Him, saying, Woman, I know Him not.** V. 58. **And after a little while another saw him and said, Thou art also of them. And Peter said, Man, I am not.** V. 59. **And about the space of one hour after, another confidently affirmed, saying, Of a truth this fellow also was with Him; for he is a Galilean.** V. 60. **And Peter said, Man, I know not what thou sayest. And immediately, while he yet spake, the cock crew.** V. 61. **And the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how He had said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny Me thrice.** V. 62. **And Peter went out and wept bitterly.** There was little rest, and no sleep, in the palace of the high priest that night. The departure of the band had caused great excitement throughout the household, and its victorious return caused all the servants to be worked up to the highest pitch. For the time being, all the adherents of the prisoner were in like condemnation. The servants had surrounded Jesus and thus taken Him captive, and then marched Him to the house of the high priest. Peter's impulsive nature came to the front here: he must see what was going to happen. The servants had kindled a good fire in the midst of the court of the palace, one which supplied light as well as heat. Peter, having gained admission into the arched doorway, joined the servants about the fire, for the chill of the spring night was in the air. Here a maid saw him, as he was sitting toward the light. Fixing her eyes upon him very firmly to be sure she was making no mistake, she accused him of being a follower of Jesus. She made her accusation in the form of a statement to the other servants: Also this man was with Him. And Peter, taken by surprise, uttered the words before he really had time to consider them: I don't know Him, woman. His conscience may have bothered him some after that, for he appears to have gone away from the fire for some time. But it was not long before he was attacked from different sides, not only the janitresses accusing him, but also one of the men: And thou also art of them, a member of that notorious band. Peter had denied being a follower of Jesus, now he denies his discipleship, with greater emphasis. But the opposition was not quieted, for hardly had another hour gone by when still another man affirmed more strongly: In truth also this man was with Him, for he is a Galilean. And Peter again denied, pretending even ignorance of what the man was saying. So the threefold denial of the Lord had become a fact, according to the prophecy of the evening before. At this moment the cock crowed, and at the same time Jesus turned to look at Peter. This look of the Savior, whom he had so deeply grieved with his great sin, entered deeply into the heart of Peter. It was either that Jesus at this time was taken from the chambers of Hannas to those of his son-in-law, Caiaphas, or that the judgment-hall was on a level from which one could look down into the court. Now Peter recalled every word of his Master, and surely also the boastfulness with which he had answered Him. And he went out of the palace into the open and wept bitterly. That was sincere sorrow and repentance. Peter trusted in the Word of the Gospel, the promise of salvation which he had heard so often out of the mouth of his Teacher, and in the strength of that faith he found forgiveness.

Jesus treated with contempt: V. 63. **And the men that held Jesus mocked Him, and smote Him.** V. 64. **And when they had blindfolded Him, they struck Him on the face, and asked Him, saying, Prophesy, who is it that smote Thee?** V. 65. **And many other things blasphemously spake they against Him.** Cp. Matt. 26, 67. 68; Mark 14, 65. The servants of the high priest and the elders were meanwhile having their sport with the captured Prophet of Galilee, and their rude jests and blasphemous mockeries were committed unreproved. They derided Him, they jeered and sneered at Him, they struck Him, not only in the face, but on the body; they put a heavy veil or cloth over His face and blasphemously ordered Him to prophesy as to who it was that was hitting Him. And when one form of cruelty palled upon them, they devised some new blasphemous trick to while away the time. That was the beginning of the martyrdom of Christ, of His suffering for the sins of the whole world. And if in our days the unbelievers, the blasphemous band of scoffers, jeer at the prophecy, at the Word of Christ, and wantonly persecute the servants of Christ, that is only the continuation of the sufferings of Christ. But the patience of Christ is our salvation as well as our example.

Summary of the trial: V. 66. **And as soon as it was day, the elders of the people and the chief priests and the scribes came together, and led Him into their council, saying,** v. 67. **Art Thou the Christ? Tell us. And He said unto them, If I tell you, ye will not believe;** v. 68. **and if I also ask you, ye will not answer Me, nor let Me go.** V. 69. **Hereafter shall the Son of Man sit on the right hand of the power of God.** V. 70. **Then said they all, Art Thou, then, the Son of God? And He said unto them,**

Ye say that I am. V. 71. **And they said, What need we any further witness? For we ourselves have heard of His own mouth.** Cp. Matt. 26, 59—66; Mark 14, 55—64. Luke gives a summary of both the night meeting at the palace of the high priest and of the morning meeting, in which the sentence of the night was repeated and confirmed. As soon as it was morning, the entire Sanhedrin convened in the Hall of Polished Stones. It was necessary that the sentence of death be taken into consideration once more, and that the travesty upon justice be made not quite so apparent. The demand of the members of the Sanhedrin was short and insolent. He should tell them whether He really were the Christ, the promised Messiah. Jesus gently reminded them of the fact that their entire trial was a farce and a mockery, for they neither believed His words nor answered His questions. One word, however, He told them with great solemnity, namely, that He, the Son of Man, would be sitting at the right hand of the power of God. When these His judges see Him again, their rôles will be exchanged. Then He will be the Judge, and the enemies of Christ will shrink back in terror when they are haled before the throne of His judgment. Then they will call upon the mountains to fall upon them, and upon the hills to cover them. And when they all, following the example of the high priest, demanded a short statement whether He were the Son of God, He gave the majestic answer: You say it; for I am. With this statement sounding in their ears, the unjust condemnation of the council was in reality the most perfect vindication of the innocence and holiness of Jesus. The reason, then, why the Jews wanted Jesus to die was because He was the Son of God and as such had told them the truth, had rebuked their evil works, and exposed their hypocrisy. But we Christians thank our dear Lord Jesus Christ for having permitted this sentence to be pronounced upon Him, and for testifying to this fact to the very last, confirming it with a solemn oath, that He is the Son of the most blessed God. Now we know that we are reconciled to God by the death of His Son. The blood of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, cleanseth us from all sin.

Summary. *While Judas offers to betray his Master, Jesus has Peter and John prepare the Passover meal in a designated house, eats the supper with His disciples, institutes the Holy Eucharist, teaches a lesson in humility, warns Peter against overconfidence in self, suffers the agony of Gethsemane, is betrayed to the Jews by the kiss of Judas, and in the court of the Sanhedrin is condemned to death, while Peter denies Him three times.*

CHAPTER 23.

The Trial before Pilate. Luke 23, 1—25.

The accusation: V. 1. **And the whole multitude of them arose, and led Him unto Pilate.** V. 2. **And they began to accuse Him, saying, We found this fellow perverting the nation, and forbidding to give tribute to Caesar, saying that He Himself is Christ, a king.** V. 3. **And Pilate asked Him, saying, Art Thou the king of the Jews? And He answered him and said, Thou sayest it.** V. 4. **Then said Pilate to the chief priests and to the people, I find no fault in this Man.** V. 5. **And they were the more fierce, saying, He stirreth up the people, teaching throughout all Jewry, beginning from Galilee to this place.** The whole multitude of them arose; though it was so early in the morning, the members of the Sanhedrin had appeared practically in a body, most of them being pleased to a point where they could not have rested quietly. "At the morning meeting of the Sanhedrin it had doubtless been resolved to put the confession of Jesus that He was the Christ into a shape fit to be laid before Pilate, that is, to give it a political character, and charge Him with aspiring to be king." [101] Now they led Him to Pilate. Down through the courts of the Temple they took Him, out through one of the southern or western gates and to the other side of the Tyropeon Valley, where, according to the opinion of modern investigators, the Praetorium of Pilate was situated. And no sooner did Pilate appear before them on the elevated pavement before the palace than they began to bring their accusations. By a skilful manipulation of the Lord's confession they attempted to put into it a political significance. They charged Him with perverting the nation, with stirring up the people to disaffection and rebellion, with doing His best to hinder them from paying tribute to Caesar, with saying that He was the Christ, a king. These charges were the foulest and basest slanders that could have been invented by them, telling in each case what the Jewish leaders had attempted to make Jesus do, what they had desired Him to do, in order that they might have reasons to bring Him before the procurator. The entire conduct of the Lord disproved the charges as malicious and unfounded accusations. Jesus had expressly taught and commanded that the constitutional taxes and obedience to a lawful prince must be paid; He had escaped when the people had planned to make Him a king, an earthly ruler. Pilate knew the accusations to be nothing but trumped-up charges, but now that he had Jesus before him, he determined to find out wherein His kingship consisted, what His kingdom really was. Upon the governor's question

101) *Expositor's Greek Testament*, 1, 635.

whether He was the king of the Jews, Jesus gave an affirmative answer. And, as John relates, He made some attempt to explain the matter to the heathen, but without avail. However, a mere glance at the accused had convinced Pilate that this was not a rebel or seditionist, and that His kingship certainly offered no dangers to the existence of the Roman Empire. He therefore told the high priests and the crowds outside, since by this time the rabble had gathered from every part of the city, that he found no kind of fault in this man. But the Jewish leaders had, in the mean time, not been idle, but had been busily engaged in stirring up the mob to lust for blood. In the face of the governor's finding, therefore, the chief priests kept insisting and contending most bitterly that they were right, that Jesus had stirred up the people to sedition, exciting them with His teaching, that He had done so in the entire country of Judea, having begun in Galilee and continued His rebellious work, spread His mischievous doctrine over the whole province even to this holy city. The chief priests were determined to have their will carried into execution at any cost, by fair means or foul, and one misrepresentation more or less did not seriously burden their consciences.

Jesus before Herod: V. 6. **When Pilate heard of Galilee, he asked whether the Man were a Galilean.** V. 7. **And as soon as he knew that He belonged unto Herod's jurisdiction, he sent Him to Herod, who himself also was at Jerusalem at that time.** V. 8. **And when Herod saw Jesus, he was exceeding glad; for he was desirous to see Him of a long season because he had heard many things of Him; and he hoped to have seen some miracle done by Him.** V. 9. **Then he questioned with Him in many words; but He answered him nothing.** V. 10. **And the chief priests and scribes stood and vehemently accused Him.** V. 11. **And Herod with his men of war set Him at naught, and mocked Him, and arrayed Him in a gorgeous robe, and sent Him again to Pilate.** V. 12. **And the same day Pilate and Herod were made friends together; for before they were at enmity between themselves.** As soon as Pilate heard the word Galilee, he became intensely interested. Calm, judicious reasoning had told him from the start that Jesus was innocent, but his weak, vacillating nature feared an uprising of the Jews, which might have become a serious matter with the city full of pilgrims. Here was a chance to get rid of the entire unpleasant matter. At once he inquired and received the information that Jesus belonged to the jurisdiction of Herod Antipas, the tetrarch of Galilee. Without a moment's delay, the governor of Judea, to whose court the case had been brought and by whom it should be decided, sent the prisoner to Herod, who had also come up for the feast and resided in the fine palace of the Herodian family in the western part of the city. That was cowardice on the part of Pilate, combined with legal quibbling. He tried to evade the issue, to escape a disagreeable situation. He had not been so careful of jurisdiction when he had caused the Galileans to be killed in the Temple, chap. 13, 1. If any one holds an office, he should perform the work of that office, even though it occasionally be disagreeable. And, above all, every one should be honest and true in his work. Herod was highly pleased when Jesus was brought before him. He had heard many things concerning Him even in Galilee, chap. 9, 7—9, and had been anxious to see Him for a long time. He now had the opportunity without a special effort on his part. Here was a new amusement to keep him occupied, to provide an agreeable change in the monotony of life, for the prisoner might be able to delight him and his courtiers with some clever tricks or even perform a miracle for his special benefit. As soon as Jesus was brought into his palace, therefore, he plied Him with questions of many kinds. But he was sadly disappointed, for Jesus did not answer him with so much as a word. Herod had had opportunity enough to hear the truth, out of the mouth of that fearless witness, John the Baptist, but he had hardened his heart against the truth and had killed the preacher of righteousness. And even now it was not the desire for the preaching of salvation that was actuating him, but mere curiosity. That is a terrible punishment of God when He no longer addresses Himself to a person in His Gospel, but ignores him entirely. The chief priests and scribes, fearing that their case might take an unfavorable turn in their absence, had followed the soldiers with the prisoner to the palace of Herod and there renewed their vehement charges. But Herod paid no attention to their crying. His hope of amusement had been spoiled by the unwillingness of the prisoner to respond. He and the soldiers of his body-guard, therefore, treated Him with every sign of contempt, mocked Him, had Him clothed in a costly or shining robe, "probably a cast-off royal mantle of his own," and then sent Him back to Pilate. His action indicated that he considered Jesus a helpless, irresponsible fool, a mock king, a man to be laughed at, not to be feared or punished. Pilate and Herod had before this, probably due to the governor's cruel action, been on bad terms; there had been enmity between them. But now the disagreement was forgotten. Herod had had his sport, such as it was, but would not try the case, which he referred back to Pilate as the proper judge. Jesus was the plaything of unprincipled men. There is really no difference in kind, whether the children of the world accuse Christ and the disciples of Christ as rebels and perverters of morals or despise them as innocuous fools. And where enmity toward Christ is concerned, former enemies become the best of friends.

Another subterfuge of Pilate's: V. 13. **And Pilate, when he had called together the chief priests and the rulers and the people,** v. 14. **said unto them, Ye have brought this Man unto me as one that perverteth the people; and, behold, I, having examined Him before you, have found no fault in this Man touching those things whereof ye accuse Him;** v. 15. **no, nor yet Herod; for I sent you to him; and, lo, nothing worthy of death is done unto Him.** V. 16. **I will therefore chastise Him, and release him.** V. 17. **(For of necessity he must release one unto them at the feast.)** V. 18. **And they cried out all at once, saying, Away with this Man, and release unto us Barabbas** v. 19 **(who for a certain sedition made in the city, and for murder, was cast into prison).** One scheme of Pilate's, to place the responsibility on some one else, having failed, he hoped to have success along another line. The prisoner was once more before the court of Pilate, and so he formally called together the accusers, the chief priests and the leaders and also the people, whose number was growing with every minute. He assembled them in order to communicate to them the finding of Herod and also his own mind and will. He sums up his points. Their charge had been that Jesus was turning the people away from their allegiance to the Roman Emperor. Now he had made a careful inquiry into the matter, not only in a private hearing, John 18, 33, but also in their presence. And not a single charge had been found to be substantiated by any reliable testimony or by the confession of the prisoner. Nor had the finding of Herod differed from his own. Jesus had been sent to the ruler of Galilee, and nothing worthy of death had been laid to His charge. But now Pilate made his first grievous public mistake in telling the people that he would scourge Jesus before giving Him His liberty. If Jesus was innocent, as the governor repeatedly affirmed, it was a crying injustice to cause Him to be whipped in the cruel manner which was then customary. He showed his weakness before the people by making this proposition, for he neither wanted to burden his conscience too heavily, nor did he want the Jews to go wholly unsatisfied. The illegal chastisement thus announced simultaneously with the intention to release the prisoner prepared the way for the violent opposition of the people, who were now lusting for blood and felt that the governor was in their power. His weak, futile policy results in a terrible crime. "Fanaticism grows by concession." It was Pilate's custom to release some prisoner at the time of the Passover, and this former favor had grown to be an expected duty. The necessity had devolved upon him to release one prisoner to them in connection with the feast. But before Pilate could so much as bring out his suggestion fully, with all the reasons why the people should prefer the release of Jesus to that of Barabbas, the mob began to clamor, not with single voices raised here and there, but in one immense shout rising from all those throats at once, with overpowering volume. They did not plead or beg, but they demanded with a threatening attitude: Take this One away: to punishment, to death with Him! But release to us Barabbas. That was the people's choice: a low and hideous criminal, a rebel and a murderer, who had been thrown into jail to await the sentence of death. It was a case of blindness and hardness of heart without parallel in history. And to think that many of these same people had probably been in the number of those that had called out in loud hosannas five days before, that for fear of them the chief priests had not dared to lay their hands on Jesus a scant three days ago! Note: If any one is willing to honor Jesus as a great prophet, but refuses to repent and to believe in the Savior, to give Him his whole heart, he is in reality far from His grace and from true discipleship. With such people it takes very little to be drawn over into the ranks of the enemies.

The sentence of Pilate: V. 20. **Pilate, therefore, willing to release Jesus, spake again to them.** V. 21. **But they cried, saying, Crucify Him, crucify Him!** V. 22. **And he said unto them the third time, Why? What evil hath He done? I have found no cause of death in Him; I will therefore chastise Him and let Him go.** V. 23. **And they were instant with loud voices, requiring that He might be crucified. And the voices of them and of the chief priests prevailed.** V. 24. **And Pilate gave sentence that it should be as they required.** V. 25. **And he released unto them him that for sedition and murder was cast into prison, whom they had desired; but he delivered Jesus to their will.** When the first wrong step has been taken, a person is liable to be carried forward by his own impetus. Pilate was no longer in control of the situation. And he was not dealing with rational human beings, but with an infuriated mob, which now might have been quelled by only one method: ruthless violence. As well try to stop a tornado by raising your hand as to reason with a bloodthirsty mob. Pilate called to them, trying to make himself heard above the turmoil, for he wanted to release Jesus. But they shouted back, with ever-increasing strength, demanding that Jesus be crucified. For the third time Pilate tried to urge the fact of Christ's innocence, that he had found no reason to put Him to death, and that he would therefore chastise Him and release Him. But there was no staying the current. They were instant, urgent, with the full volume of their combined voices. Their shouts rolled and reverberated along the narrow streets until they broke into frightened echoes against the Temple walls, demanding that Christ be crucified. And the longer the governor hesi-

tated, the more confidently their cries rang out, and the threatening tone grew from one minute to the next. At last weak Pilate, outgeneraled by the high priests, succumbed; he decided, he gave judgment according to the will of the people; for of right and justice not a vestige remained. Note the contrast brought out by Luke: Him who on account of rebellion and murder had been thrown into prison, the obstinate, wicked criminal, he released because they wanted it; but Jesus, the Savior of the world, who was even then suffering for the sins of the howling mob, he delivered to their will; he decided that He must die by crucifixion. Pilate is a type of the unjust judges of this world that do not follow righteousness and justice in the fulfilment of their duties, but far too often are tools of the enemies of the Church. And, like Pilate, many children of the world hesitate between truth and falsehood, between friendship and enmity for Christ, until in the crisis they are overcome by the evil, and openly persecute the cause of Christ.

The Crucifixion, Death, and Burial of Christ. Luke 23, 26—56.

The sympathy of the women: V. 26. **And as they led Him away, they laid hold upon one Simon, a Cyrenian, coming out of the country, and on him they laid the cross, that he might bear it after Jesus.** V. 27. **And there followed Him a great company of people, and of women, which also bewailed and lamented Him.** V. 28. **But Jesus, turning unto them, said, Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for Me, but weep for yourselves and for your children.** V. 29. **For, behold, the days are coming in the which they shall say, Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bare, and the paps which never gave suck.** V. 30. **Then shall they begin to say to the mountains, Fall on us; and to the hills, Cover us.** V. 31. **For if they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?** Cp. Matt. 27, 31—34; Mark 15, 21. In accordance with the decision of Pilate, Jesus was led away from the Praetorium, out to a spot without the walls, where the malefactors were crucified. On the way, the cross of Jesus, which He was obliged to bear as a condemned criminal, became too heavy for Him. The great nervous strain of the last few days, the agony of the evening before, the vigil of the night, the indignities that He had been obliged to endure, all these combined to bring upon Him a weakness of the body which could not sustain the weight of the cross. The soldiers, therefore, laid hold upon, drafted into service, one Simon of Cyrene, a city on the northern coast of Africa. He was a Jew of the so-called *diaspora*, and had come to Jerusalem for the feast. He probably was later, and may have been at that time, a disciple of Jesus, Rom. 16, 13. And so this man had the honor of bearing the cross of Christ for Him, to partake of some of the sufferings intended for the Savior. While the soldiers, with Christ and the two malefactors, were slowly making their way out through the narrow streets towards the open space before the walls, there was a great number of people and also of women that followed after. Some of these people may have been present at the governor's palace, others may have joined the procession from curiosity, but the women were interested out of sincere compassion according to the sympathy of men. Their feeling would probably have been the same in the case of any other person. They beat their breasts and lamented Him; they showed every indication of deep grief. These actions prompted Jesus to turn to them and address an appealing admonition to them. He calls them daughters of Jerusalem; they represented the city, probably many of them had grown up in the very shadow of the great Temple; they should be familiar with the words of the prophets. Not over Him and on His account should they weep and lament, but for themselves and for their children. He hinted with some definiteness at the fate of the city which they loved, and whose final destruction was but a matter of a few years, in accordance with prophecy. In times of great tribulation and punishment it is the mothers that suffer most heavily. The time will come when the sterile and childless women will be happy and fortunate above the others, chap. 21, 23. For so horrible will the affliction of those days be that people will not know where to stay for the greatness of the terror upon them. They will call upon the mountains and hills to fall upon them and cover them from the wrath of the almighty God, Hos. 10, 8; Is. 2, 19. For if even the just and holy Son of God must suffer so terribly under the weight of God's judgment, what will happen to such as are all as an unclean thing and all their righteousnesses as filthy rags? Note: The Lord here indicates that His suffering is the result of sin, which He, the Holy One of God, has taken upon Him, 2 Cor. 5, 21. Also: The words of Jesus show wherein true sympathy with the suffering of Christ consists, namely, not in mere external emotion, in tears and wringing of hands, but in true repentance. "Such admonition we should accept as addressed to us. For we must all confess that we, on account of sins, are like an unfruitful, dry tree, in which there is nothing good, nor can any good come out therefrom. What will it, then, behoove us to do? Nothing but to weep and to cry to God for forgiveness, and to resist the evil, sinful nature earnestly, and not to give it free rein. For there the sentence stands: Since the fruitful tree is thus treated and God permits such severe sufferings to come upon His dear Son, we should certainly not feel secure, but acknowledge our sin, fear the wrath of God, and pray for forgiveness."[102]

102) Luther, 13a, 440.

The crucifixion: V. 32. **And there were also two other, malefactors, led with Him to be put to death.** V. 33. **And when they were come to the place which is called Calvary, there they crucified Him, and the malefactors, one on the right hand, and the other on the left.** V. 34. **Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do. And they parted His raiment and cast lots.** At the same time that Jesus was led out of the city to be crucified, and in accordance with the word of prophecy, two other men were taken to the same place. But these men were really malefactors, they had done something wicked, which merited death. They were to be lifted up at the same time with Him, they were also to suffer death by crucifixion. Jesus was placed on the same level with them, Is. 53, 12. They came to the place which was called Calvary, the place of the skull, very probably from the shape of the hill, which resembled the upper part of a skull. There they crucified the Lord in the midst between the two malefactors; they stretched out His arms on the cross-pieces, pierced His hands and feet with nails to hold His body in place. Thus did Christ suffer the punishment for our sins, thus did He bear our sins in His own body on the cross, 1 Pet. 2, 24; Is. 53, 5. The cross was a wood of cursing and shame, Heb. 12, 2; Gal. 3, 13. He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities, Is. 53, 5. And still, there was no bitterness, no resentment in the heart of Jesus, not even against those that were carrying out the sentence, none too gently, if the usual cruelty was practised. With His Savior's heart going out to them in the blindness of their crime, Jesus calls out over the heads of His tormentors: Father, forgive them, for they know not what they are doing! He prayed for the criminals, for His enemies that caused His death. They did not know the Lord of Glory, for His glory was hidden under the guise of a lowly servant. But they did it in ignorance, Acts 3, 17. And therefore the Lord prayed for them all here, and He had patience with them once more afterwards. He had His apostles go and preach the Gospel of His resurrection to them. And it was only after they had rejected this Gospel absolutely and finally that He carried into execution upon them the sentence of destruction. This first word of Christ from the cross is full of comfort for all sinners. In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, Eph. 1, 7. But of all these wonderful facts the Roman soldiers at that moment knew nothing. For them such occurrences were all in the day's work. They calmly sat down under the cross, where some of them remained as guards, and divided the Lord's garments by casting lots; they passed the time away in gambling. In the same way the children of the world, that are daily crucifying Christ anew, sit in the shadow of Christian churches, and play and gamble away the time of grace until, in many cases, it is too late for repentance.

The mocking of the people: V. 35. **And the people stood beholding. And the rulers also with them derided Him, saying, He saved others; let Him save Himself, if He be Christ, the Chosen of God.** V. 36. **And the soldiers also mocked Him, coming to Him, and offering Him vinegar,** v. 37. **and saying, If Thou be the king of the Jews, save Thyself.** V. 38. **And a superscription also was written over Him in letters of Greek and Latin and Hebrew, THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS.** The anticlimax of the people's frenzy had now been reached. Their bloodthirstiness had been satisfied, and it was only their curiosity that kept them at Calvary. They watched the soldiers in their gruesome work until the crucifixion had been completed. Then, however, they did not remain idle. No other distraction offering itself, they joined the rulers. For these worthies, who would at any other time have felt it a disgrace to mingle with the vulgar crowd, could not deny themselves the joy of coming out from the city and expressing their satisfaction over the success of their plan. They turned up their noses in token of utter contempt of the Lord, and sneeringly remarked: Others He saved; let Him save Himself, if this be indeed the Christ of God, the Chosen One. What they had formerly denied with all the bitterness of their envious hearts they now confessed, showing that they were hypocrites and rotten to the core. They had seen and heard a large enough number of evidences of His Godhead to satisfy any ordinary person, but here they again cast doubt upon the entire matter by challenging Him to come down from the cross to save Himself. Cp. Ps. 22, 6—8. 17. But the Lord did not return the insults in kind. When He was reviled, He reviled not again; when He suffered, He threatened not, 1 Pet. 2, 23. The soldiers also, tiring of their game of dice, joined in the mockery, making fun especially of the appellation "King of the Jews." That seemed to them the height of ridiculousness, that this man should have aspired to be the ruler of the despised Israelites. The occasion for using just this name was given by the fact that Pilate had had a superscription placed over the head of Jesus, at the top of the cross, naming the cause or reason for His condemnation: The king of the Jews is this man, or, as it read literally: Jesus of Nazareth, the king of the Jews. In Greek, the language commonly spoken on the street and in business, in Latin, the official language of the Romans, and in Hebrew, or Aramaic, the home language of the majority of the Jews, the superscription had been written out. Note: Jesus here became, as Luther says, the rock of offense before the whole world, every class of people and the most representative languages of the world being here represented. Also: Pilate undoubtedly

wanted to express his contempt both for the Jews and for Jesus by choosing the superscription in that form. But his words were actually true and should be a comfort to this day to all that are children of Abraham in the real, the spiritual sense. The King of Grace, the King of Glory, that is the Savior in whom we place our trust.

The penitent malefactor: V. 39. **And one of the malefactors which were hanged railed on Him, saying, If Thou be Christ, save Thyself and us.** V. 40. **But the other answering rebuked him, saying, Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation?** V. 41. **And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds; but this Man hath done nothing amiss.** V. 42. **And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom.** V. 43. **And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with Me in paradise.** During the first hour of the excruciating agony of the crucifixion, both malefactors had joined the surging throngs in reviling and cursing and mocking the man hanging in the middle between them, Matt. 27, 44. But the example of wonderful patience, together with the words which fell from the lips of the Sufferer, gradually caused one of the criminals to become silent. His heart was pierced by thoughts of sorrow and repentance, he acknowledged Jesus as his Savior. When, therefore, the other malefactor continued his objurgations, sneeringly asking Jesus to save Himself and them also, the man on the right hand rebuked him. It is difficult to say in just what way he brought out the emphasis, but he probably meant to express: Isn't there even fear of the holy, just God in thy heart, not to speak of any other feeling of commiseration and sympathy? He reminded the other that they both were suffering justly, receiving payment in full for the sins which they had committed, exactly what their deeds were worth. But they were the only ones in that class; for this Man, this Jesus, had done nothing out of place, nothing wrong, nothing wicked. So this malefactor acknowledged his great guilt before God and accepted his punishment as a just payment of divine wrath. He was heartily sorry for his sins. And this sorrow was supplemented and completed by faith. Turning to Jesus, he begged Him: Remember me when Thou enterest into Thy kingdom. The Lord should in grace and mercy think of him and receive him into His kingdom, at the time when the Messiah would return in glory. The poor outcast thus made a splendid confession of Christ; he recognized in Him the King of heaven. He knows that he is not worthy of the mercy of this King, but upon this very mercy he relies, his trust in that gives him the strength to make his petition. This faith was a miracle of divine grace. It is always a triumph of grace if God gives to a poor criminal and outcast of human society who has served sin all his life, grace unto repentance in the very last hour of his earthly existence. And Jesus bestowed upon this malefactor the very fulness of His divine pardon. He gave him the assurance, with solemn emphasis, that he would be with Him in paradise that very day. There was no waiting for a future glory necessary, neither was there a purgatory for him to pass through, but the glory, the happiness of paradise would be his as soon as he had closed his eyes in death. For all sinners in the whole world the Lord has opened the doors of paradise by His life, suffering, and death, and whosoever believeth on Him has complete salvation as soon as he dies. That is the glorious fruit of the Passion of Christ: forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation.

The death of Jesus: V. 44. **And it was about the sixth hour, and there was a darkness over all the earth until the ninth hour.** V. 45. **And the sun was darkened, and the veil of the Temple was rent in the midst.** V. 46. **And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, He said, Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit; and having said thus, He gave up the ghost.** V. 47. **Now when the centurion saw what was done, he glorified God, saying, Certainly this was a righteous Man.** V. 48. **And all the people that came together to that sight, beholding the things which were done, smote their breasts and returned.** V. 49. **And all His acquaintance, and the women that followed Him from Galilee, stood afar off, beholding these things.** It was the sixth hour according to Jewish, high noon according to modern reckoning, when the miracle here narrated came to pass. Cp. Matt. 27, 45—56; Mark 15, 33—41. Suddenly, not only in Judea, but over the whole earth that was just then enjoying the blessing of sunlight, an abnormal, inexplicable darkness fell, one that was mentioned even by heathen writers. The sun simply failed the people of the world; his light was shut off. All nature was mourning at the climax of the suffering of Jesus. This darkness was a picture of the greater, deeper darkness that had fallen into the soul of the Redeemer. He was literally forsaken by God, given over into the power of the spirits of darkness, to suffer the indescribable agonies of hell. Christ, in these three hours, had to bear and feel the full strength, the full terror of the divine wrath over the sins of the world. He was in prison and judgment, He poured out His soul in death, He endured the agonies of hell. What an incomprehensible humiliation! The eternal Son of God in the depths of eternal death! But this also was for our salvation, in order that we might be delivered from the pain of death and hell. For delivered we are, since Jesus in the midst of the agony of hell clung to His heavenly Father and conquered wrath, hell, and damnation. But when these terrible

hours were over, the victory was gained. Not as one that was expiring in weakness, but as one that proclaimed Himself the Conqueror over all the foes of mankind, Jesus committed His soul into the hands of His heavenly Father. Thus He fulfilled the great work of atonement for the sins of the whole world, thus He died for us. It was a true death. The band which united soul and body was severed. But His death was His own voluntary deed. In His own power He laid down His life, John 10, 18. He sacrificed Himself unto God. In dying, He, as the Stronger, vanquished death and took it captive forever. Christ loved us and gave Himself for us, He was delivered for our offenses, Eph. 5, 2; Rom. 4, 25. By His death He destroyed him that had the power of death, the devil, and delivered us from death and the devil, Heb. 2, 14. 15.

But no sooner had He closed His eyes in death than all nature seemed to rise in a sudden uproar to avenge this crime committed upon the person of the Holy One of God. The wonderful veil, or curtain, which hung before the Most Holy Place in the Temple was torn down through the midst, and other great signs and wonders occurred which filled the people with dread. The centurion, the captain of the guard at the cross, was moved to give glory to God; he was convinced that Jesus was truly the Son of God, righteous in the absolute sense. And likewise all those that had come together near the place of the crucifixion and had remained to see this climax of the work of Christ, beat upon their breasts and turned to go back home, moved in a way which they could hardly explain to themselves. God had spoken, and men were filled with dread. The acquaintances of Jesus also stood at some distance, among them the women whom Luke had mentioned in a commending tone before, chap. 8, 2. 3. They saw everything that happened, and their hearts may well have been strengthened at such an exhibition of divine power. They remained even after the death of their Master and after all these great signs had come to pass; it was hard for them to leave the beloved body of their Lord.

The burial of Jesus: V. 50. **And, behold, there was a man named Joseph, a counselor; and he was a good man, and a just.** V. 51. **(The same had not consented to the counsel and deed of them.) He was of Arimathea, a city of the Jews; who also himself waited for the kingdom of God.** V. 52. **This man went unto Pilate, and begged the body of Jesus.** V. 53. **And he took it down, and wrapped it in linen, and laid it in a sepulcher that was hewn in stone, wherein never man before was laid.** V. 54. **And that day was the preparation, and the Sabbath drew on.** V. 55. **And the women also, which came with Him from Galilee, followed after, and beheld the sepulcher, and how His body was laid.** V. 56. **And they returned, and prepared spices and ointments; and rested the Sabbath-day according to the commandment.** Cp. Matt. 27, 57—61; Mark 15, 42—47. The hearts of the apostles failed them in this great emergency; they were hidden away behind locked doors. But other men that had been timid heretofore, boldly came to the front. One of these was Joseph of Arimathea, the home of Samuel, 1 Sam. 1, 1. 19. He was a counselor, a member of the Jewish Sanhedrin, a noble and just man, possessing all the virtues which commended him to the confidence of his fellow-citizens. Luke hastens to add that this counselor had not assented to the counsel and deed of the Sanhedrin in condemning Jesus to death, either by refusing to appear at the mockery which they called a trial, or by withholding his vote at the time when the rest clamored for the condemnation. He was a disciple of Jesus, waiting for the revelation of the Kingdom of Glory which Jesus had promised to those that believed on Him. He went in to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. And having obtained permission, he returned to Calvary, took down the body, wrapped it in a linen burial cloth, and placed it into a grave hewn out of stone which was his property and was located near by. Haste was essential, since this was Friday, the day of preparation for the weekly Sabbath, which was about to dawn, since the day of the Jews was reckoned from evening to evening. The grave was new, no body having ever been placed there, and its nearness and accessibility were additional factors to recommend it. Meanwhile the women that had kept silent watch on Calvary under the cross of their Friend followed the little procession to the grave. The location of the grave and the manner in which the body was laid they impressed upon their memory by carefully observing the men at their sad task. And then they quickly returned to the city to prepare whatever spices and ointments they could before the beginning of the Sabbath, for as loyal members of the Jewish Church they observed all the precepts of their church-law; they respected the Sabbath law as commonly understood. Note: Jesus received an honorable burial. He rested in His grave, and thereby consecrated our graves as couches of rest. And therefore we need fear neither death nor grave. Those that fall asleep in Christ sleep in their graves, calmly and safely, until the great day of the eternal Easter dawns.

Summary. *Jesus is arraigned before Pilate, sent by him to Herod, and returned to the court of Pilate, is rejected by the people, who prefer to have Barabbas released, is condemned to death by crucifixion, gently rebukes the weeping women of Jerusalem, is crucified, endures the mockery of all classes of people, accepts the penitent malefactor, dies on the cross, and is buried by Joseph of Arimathea.*

CHAPTER 24.

The Resurrection of Christ. Luke 24, 1—12.

The women at the grave: V. 1. **Now upon the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they came unto the sepulcher, bringing the spices which they had prepared, and certain others with them.** V. 2. **And they found the stone rolled away from the sepulcher.** V. 3. **And they entered in, and found not the body of the Lord Jesus.** V. 4. **And it came to pass, as they were much perplexed thereabout, behold, two men stood by them in shining garments;** v. 5. **and as they were afraid, and bowed down their faces to the earth, they said unto them, Why seek ye the living among the dead?** V. 6. **He is not here, but is risen; remember how He spake unto you when He was yet in Galilee,** v. 7. **saying, The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again.** Cp. Matt. 28, 1—10; Mark 16, 1—8. On the first day of the week according to Christian reckoning, which Luke employs on account of his readers, very early in the morning, literally at deep dawn, when the dawn was just giving way to the brightness of the morning, at just about the time of sunrise, the women that were mentioned in the last chapter were on their way to the sepulcher. They brought the spices and ointments which they had prepared before and after the Jewish Sabbath, for their purpose was to anoint the body of Jesus. But in the mean time wonderful things had happened at the sepulcher. A great earthquake had shaken the garden and the surrounding country; an angel of the Lord had come down from heaven; he had rolled away the stone from the doorway tomb, where it fitted securely into a groove, and had sat down upon it. The women, therefore, who had been apprehensive about the stone, since they were unable to move it, could enter into the tomb. But as they did so, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. The empty grave had been a surprise, the absence of the Lord's body was a greater surprise. At the time of His burial they had noted expressly in just what way He had been laid into the tomb, and now He was not there. But while they were standing there in doubt and hesitation, all dazed by the unexpected turn of events, suddenly two men in shining, lightning-white raiment, two angels, came upon them, appeared to them. Stricken with overpowering fear in the presence of these beings from the realms of glory, they, the poor sinful human beings, could not lift up their eyes to look upon that glory, but bowed their faces to the ground. But the angels had a reassuring, a cheering message for them, destined to take away all fear out of their hearts. A wonderful Easter-message it is: Why seek ye the Living One among the dead? Jesus is the Living One; He is the source and incarnation of all life, John 1, 4. And therefore this Jesus of Nazareth, who had been crucified, had arisen from the dead. He was put to death in the flesh, but quickened on the third day by the Spirit; He had entered also according to His body into a new, spiritual, divine life. Then He had gone and preached to the spirits in prison, He had shown Himself to the devil and all his angels, and also to the souls of the damned as the Conqueror of death and hell, 1 Pet. 1, 18. 19. That was the beginning of His exaltation. Now we know with the certainty of faith grounded in the Word of eternal truth that Christ, our Champion, has destroyed the power of hell and has taken away the might of the devil. He was no longer in the tomb; He had risen. And the angels remind the women how, in what words, Jesus had spoken to the disciples, probably in the presence of these women, that it was necessary for the Son of Man, that the obligation rested upon Him, according to the purpose of His incarnation, to be delivered into the hands of sinful men and to be crucified, but that He had also given them the glorious promise that He would arise on the third day. All these express prophecies, which at the time had not entered into their consciousness and understanding, had been fulfilled before their eyes. All this was irrefutable evidence for the resurrection of the Master.

Belief of the women, unbelief of the apostles: V. 8. **And they remembered His words,** v. 9. **and returned from the sepulcher, and told all these things unto the Eleven and to all the rest.** V. 10. **It was Mary Magdalene, and Joanna, and Mary, the mother of James, and other women that were with them, which told these things unto the apostles.** V. 11. **And their words seemed to them as idle tales, and they believed them not.** V. 12. **Then arose Peter, and ran unto the sepulcher; and stooping down, he beheld the linen clothes laid by themselves, and departed, wondering in himself at that which was come to pass.** As the angels delivered their message, the women recalled the saying of Jesus perfectly. And there was no longer doubt in their minds, nor any uncertainty, but joyful trust and belief in the resurrection of their Lord. Christ was risen from the dead; God had raised His Child Jesus. The Master of life had taken His life out of death. He had reared up the temple of His body, which the Jews had destroyed, in three days. And thus He has been declared to be the Son of God with power, by the resurrection from the dead, Rom. 1, 4. And therefore He has also been proved to be the Savior of the world. He has torn asunder the fetters of death. He has destroyed the power of death. There is no need for the believers to fear death, for they may gladly say: Grave, where is thy victory? Death, where is thy sting? 1 Cor. 15, 55. 57.

Death has been conquered, and the sting of death, sin, has been taken away, 1 Cor. 15, 18. 20. Christ was delivered for our offenses, and raised again for our justification, Rom. 4, 25. All these gifts belonged to the believing women by faith on that first great Easter morning. But this same faith caused them to turn back from the grave, to return to the city, not all together, but in different groups, and to bring the message of all these wonderful things to the eleven apostles first of all, but also to the other disciples. There had been a considerable number of women at the grave, not only the three Marys, Mark 16, 1, but also Joanna, chap. 8, 3, and others. And they all, although at first almost stunned by the joyful news, proclaimed it to the followers of the Master. But on that morning the apostles were still too deep in the misery of their disappointment and in their grief at the death of Jesus. The words of the women seemed to them as idle tales, as nonsense and superstitious gossip, as foolish talk, which must not be taken seriously. Only Peter (and John, John 20, 3) determined to see for himself just what the meaning of all this talk was. He arose and ran with all speed to the tomb. There he bent his body forward, without entering into the sepulcher, and saw the linen grave-clothes carefully laid away by themselves. The evidence was all against grave-robbery and the application of force. The situation was such as to set Peter thinking seriously and to wonder about what had really happened as he slowly returned to the city. The speech of the women and the evidence of the tomb spoke strongly in favor of the resurrection, but he was not quite ready yet to believe. Note: The resurrection of Jesus is the basis of the Christian's hope and faith, but it is very hard for the Christian to put his trust in this glorious truth at all times. It means simple, childlike reliance upon the Word of God under all circumstances, and that is a gift of God, for which we must daily plead in importunate prayer.

The Emmaus Disciples. Luke 24, 13—35.

The walk to Emmaus: V. 13. **And, behold, two of them went that same day to a village called Emmaus, which was from Jerusalem about threescore furlongs.** V. 14. **And they talked together of all these things which had happened.** V. 15. **And it came to pass that, while they communed together and reasoned, Jesus Himself drew near and went with them.** V. 16. **But their eyes were holden that they should not know Him.** "Two of them," not of the apostles, but of the larger body of the disciples. Most commentators agree in stating that Luke himself was one of the two men, and that he here tells his own experience in such graphic detail. Emmaus was a village lying to the northwest of Jerusalem, now generally identified with Kalonieh, sixty stadia from Jerusalem, each stadium being six hundred feet in length, and the total distance being between six and seven miles. The two men were conversing together on all the things which had taken place in Jerusalem in the last few days, on all the happenings that had transpired there. The discussion at times waxed lively, being carried on almost with some heat. It may be that one was skeptical about the reported resurrection, while the other was strongly inclined to believe. And while they were thus traveling along, all oblivious to their surroundings, a third wanderer joined them, Jesus Himself having chosen to walk with them. But their eyes were restrained, were held from recognizing their Master, in order that they might not know Him for the time being. Jesus had His own reasons for dealing with them thus; He wanted to give them a lesson in believing the Word. "And behold, with what great diligence He shows His interest in these two men of weak faith and does everything to help their weakness and to strengthen their faith! Since He sees and knows that they, in their affliction and grief, have gone away from the apostles and know neither what to think or what to hope for, He does not want to leave them in such doubt and disturbance, but comes to help them out and becomes their partner on the way; He even lets the other apostles sit all alone, although they also were in deep grief and weak enough in their faith." 103)

The conversation: V. 17. **And He said unto them, What manner of communications are these that ye have one to another as ye walk, and are sad?** V. 18. **And the one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answering, said unto Him, Art Thou only a stranger in Jerusalem, and hast not known the things which are come to pass there in these days?** V. 19. **And He said unto them, What things? And they said unto Him, Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, which was a Prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people;** v. 20. **and how the chief priests and our rulers delivered Him to be condemned to death, and have crucified Him.** V. 21. **But we trusted that it had been He which should have redeemed Israel; and beside all this, to-day is the third day since these things were done.** V. 22. **Yea, and certain women also of our company made us astonished, which were early at the sepulcher;** v. 23. **and when they found not His body, they came, saying, that they had also seen a vision of angels, which said that He was alive.** V. 24. **And certain of them which were with us went to the sepulcher, and found it even so as the women had said; but Him they saw not.** The two disciples saw in Jesus only a companion by the way, and His

103) Luther, 11, 666.

entire manner tended to confirm this idea. He inquired of them, after the manner of a casual acquaintance, as to the matters concerning which they were exchanging ideas as they were walking along, about which they were so excited. What He already knows He wishes to hear from their own mouths, and His tone is one of genuine, sympathetic interest. The two men were deeply touched by the stranger's kindly interest. They stood still to face the newcomer, and their faces registered the deep grief which was filling their hearts. As they thereupon resumed their journey, with Jesus in their company, one of the two, whose name was Cleopas, took it upon himself to explain to the stranger the questions which were agitating their minds. His first words express his great surprise that here was a pilgrim, probably the only one in that class, that did not know what had happened in Jerusalem during the last days. And when Jesus, to draw them out still further, interjected a surprised "What things?" both of the men eagerly explained to Him the cause of all their anxious conversation. The entire speech is true to life, as of people speaking under the stress of great excitement. They refer to important points, but do not explain them; they mix up their own hopes and fears into the narration; and the entire presentation savored of the confusion which was then prevailing in both their hearts. The facts concerning Jesus of Nazareth were making them feel so sad. For that Man had become in their midst a Prophet mighty in both word and deed, irresistibly eloquent in His preaching and incontrovertible in His miracles. Both before God and before all the people this testimony must stand. This Man the high priests and the rulers of the people had delivered to the sentence of a shameful death on the cross. He was dead; so much was certain. And here the dam of restraint almost gave way. They, the disciples, with the apostles in the lead, had cherished the fond hope, the eager expectation, that He would be the one to bring salvation to Israel, that He would deliver His people, the children of Israel, from the bondage of the Romans, and establish a temporal kingdom in Jerusalem. But now, in addition to all their shattered hopes, there is the further hard fact that this is the third day since His death. And there was another disquieting fact. Certain women from the circle of the disciples had greatly disturbed them all, had filled them with anxiety and fear, for they had been at His tomb at the break of day, and, not finding His body, they had come to the city with the news that they had seen a vision of angels, who told them that Jesus was living. Several men out of their midst had then gone out to verify the news, if possible, and they had found things just as the women had said; but Him, their Lord, they had not found. It was a sad tale of woe which the two men, with Cleopas taking the lead in the conversation, poured out into the sympathetic ears of the Savior. It showed how pitifully weak their faith still was in many respects, that their minds were even now filled with the Jewish dreams of an earthly Messiah, and that the many intimate talks, the long discourses of Jesus, had not had the proper effect. And the experience of these two disciples is repeated over and over again in our days. We Christians indeed believe in Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior. But this our faith and hope is often subject to vacillations and uncertainties. Hours of weakness, of trouble and tribulation will come, when all the things which we have learned from Scripture seem no more than a pious dream. Then it seems to us as though Jesus were dead, as though we had lost Him and His salvation out of our hearts.

Jesus, the kind Instructor: V. 25. **Then He said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken!** V. 26. **Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into His glory?** V. 27. **And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, He expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.** V. 28. **And they drew nigh unto the village whither they went; and He made as though He would have gone further.** V. 29. **But they constrained Him, saying, Abide with us; for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent. And He went in to tarry with them.** V. 30. **And it came to pass, as He sat at meat with them, He took bread, and blessed it, and brake, and gave to them.** V. 31. **And their eyes were opened, and they knew Him; and He vanished out of their sight.** The two Emmaus pilgrims had opened their hearts to the Lord, for out of the fulness of the heart the mouth speaketh. It was such a full and free confession as they would not have thought of making in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred. But the kind sympathy of this stranger invited, almost compelled, confidences, and so they had opened to Him their whole heart. The first words of the Lord in commenting upon the information He had received were a firm reproof, not unmixed with gentleness. Foolish men He calls them and slow of heart to trust and believe in all things that the prophets had spoken. They had not properly attended to the description of the Messiah as given by the prophets, and they had not looked upon His own teaching and miracles with enlightened eyes. It was a necessity for Christ, for the Master in whose company they had been all these long months; it was an obligation resting upon Him which He could not evade. First the Passion, then the glory; through cross to crown. At all times there is much sin, foolishness, lack of faith mixed with the weakness and grief of the believers. And this must be pointed out without hesitation. For that

will open the way to a better understanding, as in this case. The Lord deliberately began with the books of Moses and then continued through the books of the prophets; He interpreted to these two disciples the passages concerning His person and work. He compared prophecy and fulfilment; He pointed out the meaning of passages which to them had been hidden treasure-chests; He took His time to explain every word thoroughly, in order that their eyes might finally be opened. It was a long discourse, and from the mouth of the greatest Teacher of all times. Would that we had its exact contents to-day! But probably it has purposely not been preserved, in order that we may search the Scriptures of the Old Testament all the more diligently. Meanwhile, the two or two and one-half hours needed for a slow journey to Emmaus had brought them to the village, and Jesus purposely assumed the air of one that intended to go farther. He wanted to see whether His explanation of the Scripture and its application had made such an impression upon them that they would want to remain in His company. Happy they that have Christ with them thus! His plan succeeded beautifully, for both of the disciples urged Him with earnest pleading: Abide, remain with us, for it is toward evening, and the day is drawing to a close. Their real reason was, of course, that their hearts had been so touched and overwhelmed with the beauty and power of His explanation that they wanted to hear more of this charming and edifying conversation. Note: This is ever the effect of the doctrine of the Gospel: wherever it is felt, its Author, the ever-blessed Jesus, is earnestly entreated to dwell in the heart. And so Jesus went in to tarry, to remain, with them for the evening meal, at least. But when He reclined at the table with them, He thought the time fitting to reveal Himself to them. Accordingly, He took the bread, gave thanks over it, broke it, and gave it to them. At this act their eyes were opened, and they recognized Him. This stranger was no one else than their Friend and Master, the same who had so often, in His capacity as the Head of the little band, performed this customary work. But in the same moment when their faces lighted up in joyful recognition, Jesus became invisible before them, He vanished out of their sight; He departed from them in that invisible manner. Though He was still their Master and Friend, they could no longer enjoy His intimate company as in the days before His suffering. They should no longer be bound by His visible presence, but learn to place their trust in the word of His Gospel which He has left for all men.

Mutual expressions of joy: V. 32. **And they said one to another, Did not our heart burn within us while He talked with us by the way, and while He opened to us the Scriptures?** V. 33. **And they rose up the same hour, and returned to Jerusalem, and found the Eleven gathered together, and them that were with them,** v. 34. **saying, The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon.** V. 35. **And they told what things were done in the way, and how He was known of them in breaking of bread.** The vanishing of Christ did not fill the hearts of these two men with new sorrow and fear. They had the blessed remembrance of the words of Jesus which He had spoken to them on the way. Full of eager happiness they exchanged confidences on their experience. It is an expressive word: their hearts had been burning within them. "Their heart began to burn while the Stranger expounded Scripture, and kept burning, and burning up into ever clearer flame, as He went on." In His discourse on the way the Lord had thoroughly opened to them the Scriptures. They now realized that the prophecies of old had been to them a sealed and hidden book. But now it had been opened to them, now they comprehended some of its wonderful treasures and beauties. This is always the effect of the words of Christ. When we are sad and weak, when we are longing for consolation and thereupon hear the Word of the Lord with all eagerness, then our heart will be warmed with the comfort of the salvation and the forgiveness of sins, and our faith, which was at the point of extinction, is once more enlivened to the brightness of a rich flame. For the risen Christ is in and with His Word. It is the living Christ who impresses the Word of the Gospel into our hearts and seals the comfort of the atonement through the blood of Christ in our hearts. The joy of these men did not permit them to rest at Emmaus. Though it must have been after six o'clock then, they arose from their meal at once; they hurried back to Jerusalem; they felt constrained to bring the good news to the others. And for the moment they found everybody happy. The apostles and disciples were all gathered together into one place, and they were met with the information that the Lord had risen indeed and had appeared to Simon. Some time in the course of the day Jesus had met Peter, probably to reassure the deeply penitent apostle of His forgiveness. But the two disciples from Emmaus were not sorry that some one had forestalled them in bringing the happy news. For this would prove a welcome confirmation of their own experience, and the others would be only too glad to hear their story and thus to receive further assurance. It was unfortunate that the old doubts soon returned into the hearts of most of the disciples, as Mark is obliged to state. Christians must not depend too strongly upon moments of exaltation in their spiritual life. We cannot always be on the mountain peaks in our Christian experience, but must now and then descend into the valleys. But His Word is with us even in the valley of the shadow of death.

The Last Appearances of Christ.

Luke 24, 36—53.

Easter evening: V. 36. **And as they thus spake, Jesus Himself stood in the midst of them and saith unto them, Peace be unto you!** V. 37. **But they were terrified and affrighted, and supposed that they had seen a spirit.** V. 38. **And He said unto them, Why are ye troubled, and why do thoughts arise in your hearts?** V. 39. **Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself; handle Me and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see Me have.** V. 40. **And when He had thus spoken, He showed them His hands and His feet.** While the Emmaus disciples were still recounting the happenings of the afternoon, Jesus Himself suddenly stood in the midst of the assembly, His appearance here being as unexpected as His departure from Emmaus had been a few hours before. He greeted them with the greeting of peace, which should have reassured them at once. His resurrection, as it had been announced through a number of witnesses in the course of the day, was a fact. He was now standing before the eyes of His disciples, alive and well. True, there was a difference. His body now partook of the nature of a spirit. With it He had passed through the sealed tomb and through the locked doors. It was no longer subject to the natural laws governing time and place. And He brought them the wonderful gift of peace, peace in the highest and best sense of the term. He has made peace through the blood of His cross, Col. 1, 20. The wrath of God was satisfied through His suffering and death. And by the resurrection of Christ this peace is sealed to all believers. We have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Strange to say, this sudden appearance of Christ under such unusual circumstances filled the disciples with the greatest fear and terror. Whereas a few minutes ago they had mutually congratulated themselves that He was risen indeed, they now had the idea that they were looking upon a ghost. Jesus therefore rebukes them kindly, but earnestly for their unbelief. They should not be so utterly disturbed, nor should thoughts of such a nature arise in their hearts. He invited them to look closely at His hands and feet, with the marks of His crucifixion plainly showing. And if the evidence of one sense did not suffice, they should take their fingers and pass over His body and convince themselves that there was no ghost before them, but their old true Friend and Master. That same Jesus of Nazareth that was born of the Virgin Mary, that suffered under Pontius Pilate, that was crucified and died, He stood before them. This Christ is also in the state of exaltation true man according to body and soul, our flesh and blood, our Brother in all eternity. Only His is a glorified body. In and with this body He is our Savior and Redeemer, as the nail-wounds in His hands and feet showed. And this is incidentally our guarantee that He will change our vile body that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body, Phil. 3, 21. But with spiritism this appearance had nothing whatever to do. "Therefore we should know that all false ghosts and visions that permit themselves to be seen and heard, especially with rattling and blustering, are not the souls of men, but certainly devils, that thus have their sport, in order either to deceive people with false pretense and lies, or to terrorize and plague them in vain. . . . This I say that we may be sensible and not let ourselves be deceived with respect to such frauds and lies, as the devil till now has deceived and fooled, under the name of spirits, even fine people." 104)

Further proof of the Risen Savior's reality: V. 41. **And while they yet believed not for joy, and wondered, He said unto them, Have ye here any meat?** V. 42. **And they gave Him a piece of a broiled fish, and of an honeycomb.** V. 43. **And He took it and did eat before them.** V. 44. **And He said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the Psalms, concerning Me.** V. 45. **Then opened He their understanding, that they might understand the Scriptures,** v. 46. **and said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behooved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day;** v. 47. **and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.** V. 48. **And ye are witnesses of these things.** V. 49. **And, behold, I send the promise of My Father upon you; but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem until ye be endued with power from on high.** Unbelievers from joy: lifted out of the depths of despair, doubt, suspicion, and fear to the very pinnacle of glorious assurance, the reaction proves too much for the weakness of the disciples. They stood there huddled together in wonder and amazement, not knowing whether they dared credit the evidence of their senses or not. Just as a great light which suddenly bursts upon a person in the depths of a dark dungeon blinds him for some time, makes him unable to use his eyes, so it was with the disciples at this time. And therefore Jesus makes use of all patient kindness toward them, giving them time, above all, to get their bearings, and to let the truth gradually penetrate into their understanding. He asked them whether they had anything eatable at hand, and they brought Him a piece of cooked or broiled fish and of a honeycomb. The fact of His eating before them restored the former

104) Luther, 11, 690.

sense of nearness to them, and they were now ready to listen to Him. Jesus now repeated the sermon of the afternoon, telling them that His suffering and death was in full accord with the words that He had told them while He was with them, while the old relation obtained between them. Not once, but repeatedly He had pointed to the nearness of His Passion, emphasizing incidentally that this was taking place in fulfilment of the Old Testament prophecies, which were to be found not only in the books of Moses, but also in those of the prophets and in the Psalms. The entire Old Testament points forward to the work of Jesus in the redemption of the world. And Jesus was not satisfied with a general statement, but proceeded to open up their mind and understanding, thus enabling them to get the meaning of Scriptures. Once more He emphasized the necessity of the Passion and of the resurrection in accordance with the Scriptures. They had had some idea of the light before, they had believed the Scriptures to be the true Word of God, and they knew that the Messiah was therein promised; but they now learned to apply the Scriptures to their Lord and Master, they understood the work of the Messiah; they made the proper application of the words of the Old Testament to the facts before them. And that was only the first part of the Messiah's office, that was His personal activity by which He procured redemption for all men. This salvation must now also be brought to men by means of the preaching of repentance and remission of sins. First must come the acknowledgment, the free and full confession of sins; then comes the full and free forgiveness of sins. And this preaching should be done, by God's will and according to His prophecy, among all nations. Beginning at Jerusalem indeed, in the midst of God's chosen people, but going out from there, the preaching of the Gospel should reach all nations, it should cover the earth. To bear witness to these facts, to testify of the things that they had seen and heard, that was the special office with which He entrusted them. The death and resurrection of Jesus Christ are the basis of all Christian preaching; without these topics as a foundation there can be no real Gospel proclamation. But this ministry, which was thus once more solemnly given into their care, cannot be carried on properly in a man's own strength; and this was true above all in those early days of Gospel-teaching. For that reason Jesus gives the apostles the assurance that He will send the promise of the Father upon them, that He will carry out the prophecies which expressly refer to the sending of the Spirit, Is. 44, 1; Joel 2, 28. But until that time would come, until the special pouring out of the Spirit upon them would take place, they should quietly and patiently remain at Jerusalem. For they would surely be clothed, be invested, with power from on high. They would receive strength in such unusual measure that they could and should wear it like an armor in doing the Lord's will and in waging His battles. It is a consolation which should serve for the comfort also of the faithful preachers of the Gospel in our days. The Spirit is in the Word which they proclaim, and that Spirit will both give them strength and exert His power through the Word.

The ascension: V. 50. **And He led them out as far as to Bethany. And He lifted up His hands and blessed them.** V. 51. **And it came to pass, while He blessed them, He was parted from them, and carried up into heaven.** V. 52. **And they worshiped Him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy;** v. 53. **and were continually in the Temple, praising and blessing God. Amen.** Luke here, in concluding his gospel, summarizes, giving a brief account of the ascension which took place forty days later. On that day the Lord, having assembled His disciples for the last time, led them out to Mount Olivet, until they were over against, in plain view of, Bethany. The place of the ascension was probably near the summit of the mount, on the southeastern slope. Here, for the last time in visible form, the Lord lifted up His hands over His disciples to bless them. But while He was still in the act of blessing them, He was separated from them, slowly rising up into the air before their astonished gaze. Thus He ascended to heaven. But the disciples did not grieve on account of the removal of His visible presence from their midst. Having worshiped Him as their Lord and God, they returned to Jerusalem full of joy, the joy of men convinced that their Lord was truly risen from the dead and had been taken up into glory. And therefore they were continually, so long as the Temple was open for worshipers, in some part of that great building, probably in some of the halls, praising and blessing God for all the manifestations of His mercy and love which they had experienced, and knowing that great events were impending in connection with the promise of the Spirit. Thus the believers in Christ, by placing their trust in the promises of their Master, are able at all times to have hearts filled with a joy that surpasses the understanding of the children of this world. The visible presence of the Lord is removed, but He is still present with them that are His with His good gifts in the Word and with His Spirit, Matt. 18, 20; 28, 20.

Summary. *The resurrection of Jesus, testified to by the open grave and by the word of angels, is not believed by the apostles, but Jesus appears to the Emmaus disciples and then to the eleven apostles, convincing them of His having risen from the dead, commissioning them to be His ministers for the preaching of the Gospel, and finally ascending before them from the Mount of Olives.*

THE OBLIGATION OF THE WORK OF ATONEMENT.

There is no fact in Gospel history more consoling or more conducive to the strengthening of the Christian's faith than that of the readiness and willingness of Jesus in carrying out God's plan of salvation. If the Redeemer had faltered at any time, if the weakness of His human nature had at any time caused an unwillingness to carry out the work of atonement, the Gospel history would be worthless, and the comfort of a Christian in relying upon the satisfaction of Christ's vicarious suffering would be vain.

It had been prophesied concerning the Messiah: "Then said I, Lo, I come: in the volume of the Book it is written of Me, I delight to do Thy will, O My God," Ps. 40, 7. 8. This delight in doing the will of God, in carrying out the plan and counsel of God for the salvation of man, is a prominent and necessary feature of Christ's ministry. He had a clear and full conception of the extent and of the obligation of the work which He had come to perform, Heb. 10, 5—10. He knew exactly wherein the will of His heavenly Father consisted. "This is the Father's will which hath sent Me, that of all which He hath given Me I should lose nothing. . . . And this is the will of Him that sent Me, that every one which seeth the Son and believeth on Him may have everlasting life." John 6, 39. 40.

In accordance with this situation and the full understanding of its nature and scope, Jesus at all times kept the work of redemption foremost in His mind, to seek and save that which was lost, Luke 19, 10. Even at the age of twelve years He was fully conscious of the obligation resting upon Him, when He told His mother: "Wist ye not that I must be about My Father's business?" Luke 2, 49. To His disciples, who asked about the man that had been born blind, He briefly and succinctly stated His conception of His ministry: "I must work the works of Him that sent Me while it is day; the night cometh when no man can work," John 9, 4. To the eager Zacchaeus He calls out: "To-day I must abide at thy house," Luke 19, 5. That was a part of His work, of the ministry of saving souls, which He therefore could not neglect.

When the time came that He should enter into the glory of His Father through the way of suffering and death, He did not falter or waver, but set His face steadfastly to go to Jerusalem, Luke 9, 51; Mark 10, 32. 33. He told His disciples: "The Son of Man must suffer many things," Luke 9, 22; Matt. 16, 22. He was perfectly aware of the fate that was awaiting Him at Jerusalem, and yet He announces: "I must walk to-day and to-morrow and the day following; for it cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem." Luke 13, 33.

This being the case, namely, that the chief aim and purpose of Jesus in coming into the world was to work the redemption of mankind by the shedding of His blood as an atonement for the guilt of all, He emphasized this one point to the exclusion of everything else. He tells His disciples on the evening before His death: "This that is written must yet be accomplished in Me, And he was reckoned among the transgressors; for the things concerning Me have an end," Luke 22, 37. And in the garden He rebukes the impulsive Peter: "How, then, shall the Scriptures be fulfilled that thus it must be?" Matt. 26, 54. The same truth is emphasized so strongly in His discourses on the afternoon and evening of the resurrection day, as well as by the angels in their first announcement of the Easter miracle. "Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into His glory? . . . All things must be fulfilled which were written in the law of Moses and in the Prophets and in the Psalms concerning Me. . . . Thus it is written, and thus it behooved Christ to suffer," Luke 24, 7. 26. 44. 46. And these words were echoed by Peter in the interval between Christ's ascension and the Day of Pentecost: "Men and brethren, this scripture must needs have been fulfilled," Acts 1, 16.

Upon the basis of these authoritative utterances we condemn all attempts to make the work of Christ seem of a nature concerning this world only. In the face of the blasphemous efforts of the millennial dreamers we hold firmly to the teaching, preaching, and confessing of Christ's work: "Who has redeemed me, a lost and condemned sinner, purchased and won me from all sins, from death, and from the power of the devil . . . with His holy, precious blood and with His innocent suffering and death."

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO SAINT JOHN.

INTRODUCTION.

Although the author of the last Gospel does not mention his name, he describes himself with sufficient exactness to make it clear that he was none other than John, the "beloved disciple." He was the son of a Galilean fisherman, by the name of Zebedee, and of Salome, a very faithful and devoted follower of Jesus, who did not even forsake her Master when He was hanging on the cross, Matt. 27, 56; Mark 15, 40. John, together with his older brother James, followed his father's occupation on the Sea of Galilee at the time Jesus called him to the apostleship, Matt. 4, 21. 22; Mark 1, 19. 20; Luke 5, 1—10. There are some indications that John was well acquainted in Jerusalem and in Judea, where he had become a disciple of John the Baptist, John 1, 35—40. He was known to the high priest, chap. 18, 15. He had an intimate knowledge of the Temple, the Temple equipment, and the Temple worship, as the entire Apocalypse

shows, and may therefore have been of priestly descent. He seems to have owned a house in Jerusalem, chap. 19, 27. He returned with Jesus to Galilee, chap. 2, 2. 12, and therefore could hardly have been the bridegroom at the marriage of Cana, as tradition has it. When Jesus, soon after, publicly entered on His Messianic ministry in Galilee, John and James were among the first to be called by Him, Matt. 4, 21. 22. These two brothers, together with Peter, were the most confidential disciples of Christ. They alone were chosen by Him to be present at the raising of the daughter of Jairus, Luke 8, 51, at the transfiguration, Matt. 17, 2; Mark 9, 2; Luke 9, 28; during His agony in the garden, Matt. 26, 37; Mark 14, 33. And John was present also under the cross, John 19, 26. He was a witness of the Lord's death and saw the soldier pierce His side with a spear, 19, 34. 35. He was one of the first of the disciples to visit the sepulcher after the resurrection of Christ, and was present with the other disciples when Jesus showed Himself to them on the evening of the first Easter Day, and likewise eight days after, chap. 20, 19—29. Together with Peter, John cured a man who had been lame from his mother's womb, for which act he was cast into prison, Acts 3, 1—10. He was afterwards sent to Samaria, to invoke the Holy Ghost on those that had been converted by Philip the Deacon, Acts 8, 5—25. The Apostle Paul informs us, Gal. 2, that John was present at the council of Jerusalem, of which an account is given Acts 15. There can be no doubt that John was present at most of the happenings related by him in his gospel, that he was an eye- and ear-witness of the Lord's labors, journeyings, discourses, miracles, Passion, crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension.

So far as the character of John is concerned, he, with James, was in his younger days of an excitable temperament, for which reason Jesus surnamed them *Boanerges*, or Sons of Thunder, Mark 3, 17. This part of their nature came out when they asked the Lord for permission to "bid fire to come down from heaven and consume" the people of a certain village in Samaria who would not entertain their Master, Luke 9, 51—55, and when they forbade a certain man to cast out devils in the name of Jesus, since he was not one of His followers, Luke 9, 49. But when the fires of youth had burned down to a steady glow, John's nature became quiet, receptive, without, however, losing its zeal for the Master.

Of the later life of John, history reports that he went to Asia Minor about the end of the seventh decade, probably after the death of Paul. He was exiled to the island of Patmos, probably under the reign of Domitian (81—96), and there wrote the Apocalypse. Under Nerva (96—98) he seems to have regained his liberty, returning to Ephesus, where he may have spent a decade or more before. By the unanimous consent of the early church historians he reached an advanced age, for Polycarp, who died in 167, at the age of eighty-six, had seen him, Irenaeus relates that he died under Trajan (98—117), and Polycrates states that he died at Ephesus, where his grave was later shown.

The purpose of the gospel is expressly stated by the author. It is to bear witness of the fact "that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that, believing, ye might have life through His name," chap. 20, 30. 31. This is the chief aim of the gospel, and the reader cannot escape its compelling force. "On the other hand, however, the fourth gospel is so unlike the other gospels and so unique in its character that the attentive reader will involuntarily seek for some special reason why this book should have been written. We find it in the fact that in the latter years of John's life the Church began to be threatened by a dangerous heresy, which made it necessary to describe the life of Christ precisely from the point of view which John chose. Under the eyes of the aged apostle a certain Jewish agitator by the name of Cerinthus is said to have denied the essential and true divinity of Jesus Christ, rejecting the statement that the Son of God suffered death for us. That must have been the beginning of the heresy which later became known as Gnosticism, the adherents of which essayed to amalgamate the Word of God with heathen philosophy, and necessarily fell into blasphemous error. It is well within the limits of possibility that John, recognizing the danger in its beginnings, wrote his gospel against the errors of Cerinthus, since he actually makes it his point to demonstrate the divinity of Christ." 1) Incidentally, the purpose of John to supplement the narrative of the first three gospels is evident throughout. Acquaintance with these gospels is presupposed by John. They had pictured principally the Galilean ministry of Jesus; John confines himself almost exclusively to that in Judea. And even in the parrallel passages there are many additional features that tend to make the aims of Jesus clearer in a number of instances.

The gospel was written chiefly for readers of Greek descent. Hebrew words and Jewish customs are explained, cities of Palestine are located. John uses the Roman division of time, and speaks of the Jews from the standpoint of an outsider. But his gospel was not written under the influence of Greek philosophy, nor was there any connection between his doctrinal exposition and that of the Jewish school of Alexandria. John wrote by inspiration of the Holy Spirit, and his gospel is a part of the message of God for the salvation of men.

There are a number of peculiarities or distinguishing features in the gospel which should be noted. The book is remarkable for its vivid dialog, in such a natural tone that there can be no doubt as to its correctness. The intimate addresses of Christ in chapters 15 and 16 are

1) Schaller, *Book of Books*, pp. 183. 184.

especially noticeable. Chapter 17 ranks with the most beautiful passages in the entire Bible. The person and the work of the Holy Ghost are treated in detail, chapters 14—16. Only eight miracles are recorded in this gospel, but a number of them are treated at some length and become the basis for extended discussions addressed to the people.

The Gospel according to St. John was, by the unanimous testimony of the early teachers of the Church, written at Ephesus, during the last years of John's residence in that city. Its style, content, and language place it into the last decade of the first century, after the Apocalypse had been written.

The outline of the gospel is very simple. Opening with the beautiful prolog, which contains the key for the understanding of the entire gospel, it offers a brief historical introduction. Then comes a detailed discussion of the work of Jesus in the world, His introduction, His revelation in Galilee, in Jerusalem, in Samaria, His battle with the world, with the unbelief of His fellow-citizens, by whom He is finally rejected. The second part of the gospel pictures the Savior in His characteristic work of active and passive obedience, the way through suffering to glory, His last discourses, His high-priestly prayer, the story of the Passion, the story of the resurrection and glorification.

CHAPTER 1.

The Prolog of the Gospel. John 1, 1—18.

The introduction: **V. 1. In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. V. 2. The same was in the beginning with God. V. 3. All things were made by Him; and without Him was not anything made that was made. V. 4. In Him was life; and the life was the light of men. V. 5. And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not.** In the beginning, when time began, before anything was formed, when God made ready to create heaven and earth, Gen. 1, 1, when God first called things into existence. It is necessary that the evangelist use some expression which will, at least in a way, come within the ideas of men, for eternity itself is beyond the understanding of man. In the beginning *was* the Word, not: came the Word, or: was brought into existence, but: existed, had been in existence since the timeless reaches of eternity. The Word was in the beginning, 1 John 1, 1; Rev. 1, 2. The term Word, or Logos, is strictly a Biblical expression or designation for the second person of the Godhead, for Jesus Christ. He is no creature, no part of the creation, for He existed when no part of that existed. He is the Word which God spoke from eternity, begotten of God from eternity. And He existed, not as a dead substance or thing, but He was alive and active. — The relation between God and the Logos is next stated. The Word was with God, in inseparable nearness and closest intercommunion with God the Father. The Logos Himself is God, was God from the beginning and from eternity, was always connected most closely with the Father. He is distinct from God, in person, not in essence. The text implies intercourse, and therefore separate personality. But though the Word is distinguishable from God in this manner, yet the Word was God, in the absolute sense, not with a secondary or derived meaning. The Word is God in kind and essence: Jesus Christ is, according to His nature and essence, true God, 1 John 5, 21. A god that would have some one over him as a superior could not be considered God. But the Word is coessential with God, is in full possession of the Godhead, with eternity and all the other attributes of the Godhead.

This same Word was in the beginning with God: an emphatic reassertion of the distinction between the persons of the Godhead, and yet not a mere repetition of the first verse. The first statement had characterized the Word alone; the second had declared the personal distinction of the Word from God the Father; the third had expressed the essential unity and identity of the divine essence. Here John states that the eternal existence of the Word and His distinct personality had their being contemporaneously. It was the same Logos that he had spoken of in the first statements, whose deity he was here so plainly establishing. Incidentally, there is some emphasis on "in the beginning." "In the beginning He was with God; afterwards, in time, He came to be with man. His pristine condition must first be grasped, if the grace of what succeeds is to be understood."

The next statement refers to the relation of the Logos to the world. All things were made through Him, through His almighty power, the entire creation. He was not the instrument of the creating God, being Himself without power; He was not a dead tool. He was Himself the almighty Creator of the universe; He called things into existence out of nothing; the world and everything in the world owes its existence to the creation of the Word. And there is nothing, not even one thing, not a single thing, which came into existence in the beginning, at the time of creation, that was made outside of Him, without His almighty power. Note: There is a great comfort in the idea that the Savior is interested in men not only from the standpoint of redemption, but also from that of creation. There is absolutely nothing in the wide world in which He is not personally interested, with the kindness of the great Creator

that cares for all His creatures. The creatures of His hands are to become partakers of the atonement of His blood.

The relation of the Logos to mankind is brought out most beautifully. In Him is life, the true, divine, immortal life, chap. 3, 15. 16; Rom. 2, 7; 5, 10. 17. 18. 21. He is the absolute Possessor of all that may be called life; He is the Fountainhead of life; all true life has its origin in Him. It is not physical life to which John has reference, — for that has a different name in the Greek language, — but spiritual and eternal life. Of all these He is the Author, the absolute Possessor. Outside of Him, as outside of the Father, there is no life. And the life in Him, which was the fountain of existence for all true, lasting life in the world, was, at the same time, the light of men, of all men. Life and light are synonymous: the two words characterize the work of Christ. The life which Christ gives to men, wants to give to all men, is that which incidentally illumines their dark hearts and minds. That is its glorious purpose, and that purpose is to be realized by the life-giving powers of the light, by the illuminating powers of the life. According to the usage of Scriptures, light is identical with salvation, Ps. 27, 1; Is. 49, 6; 60, 1. 2. Christ, the Messiah, is the Light of the Gentiles, because He is the salvation, the Savior of all men.

The opposite of light is darkness, and the relation of the Logos to darkness is stated. And the Light, that wonderful, heavenly Light, shines in the darkness; it exerts its power, it sheds forth its light; it still shines, even now, through the Gospel. In the midst of the reign of darkness it shines, where misfortune, misery, wretchedness, condemnation are ruling, in this world, as it appears since the fall of man. The world is the kingdom of darkness, in the power of the Prince of Darkness. And the Logos has become the Light and Salvation of the world, just as soon as it had rejected God, just as soon as the darkness set in. In the Old Testament He was indeed preached only in prophecy and type, but none the less clearly for those that believed in the coming Messiah. But the true revelation of the Light took place with the incarnation of the Word. Then He, the Light, the Salvation, entered into the dark world, to give all men the benefit of His glorious illumination. He and His salvation were revealed to the world that all the people in the world might see Him and His redemption. But the darkness did not accept Him, would not understand Him; the darkness rejected the light. The darkened minds of the children of darkness, of all men by nature, do not, will not, receive the heavenly light in the Savior. That is their status, that is their character: opposition to Christ and His life- and light-giving Gospel. The great majority of the people in the world rejected the light absolutely, and they continue to do so, even when its glorious beams fall into their hearts. They prefer wretchedness and eternal death to light and life with Christ. Those that do accept His salvation have been filled with willingness by the power of the Light.

John the Baptist and the Logos: V. 6. **There was a man sent from God whose name was John.** V. 7. **The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through Him might believe.** V. 8. **He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light.** V. 9. **That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.** There was, there came, there arose, there came into being, as the result of a special plan and purpose of God, a man, not differing from other men in any respect but in this material point: he was sent out by God. He was entrusted with a mission; he was sent out for a special, distinct purpose, as the forerunner of the Messiah. His name was John ("merciful is Jehovah"), and he had received his name by God's order, Luke 1, 13. This man came to fulfil, to carry out, his mission; he came for witness, for the purpose of witnessing. He was not to do a great work of his own, but to point to another. All his work, energy, and preaching were to be spent in testifying, in preaching as one sure of the truth of his declaration. His topic was simple, but comprehensive: he was to bear witness about, with regard to, concerning the Light. That one topic, that one subject, was to be the sum and substance of his witnessing. Every one that witnesses in the sense of John must make the topic of John's testimony his own, speak and preach of Jesus, the Savior. By nature no one comes to Christ; only through the Word, by means of the testimony of the true witnesses, is Christ made known to men. Through the Word, by faith, Christ is received. John did not testify concerning himself, for he himself was not the Light, he was not the Savior. But his work and office, the purpose of his life, the end and aim of his preaching was to give testimony concerning the Light, the wonderful, life-giving Light. All should believe. The gracious will of God has as its object all men; He wants all to be saved; all should believe on the Lord Jesus Christ for their soul's salvation. So John was in no way seeking his own light, his own glory and benefit, but only that of the Savior. And this was a great privilege. For the true Light, that lighteth every man, was even then coming, was on His way; He was shortly to begin His ministry for the salvation of men. That fact characterizes the true Light, that brings out His essential goodness, that the enlightenment of the world is due to Him, that He shines with His rays of beauty and glory for every person. As the Sun of grace and righteousness, His rays are intended for all without exception. Every person that is saved receives the light of salvation from Christ; for without Him there is no salvation.

The relation of Jesus to the world: V. 10. **He was in the world, and the world was made**

by Him, and the world knew Him not. V. 11. He came unto His own, and His own received Him not. V. 12. But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name; v 13. which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. V. 14. And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the Only-begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth. At the time when John was bearing witness of Jesus, He was already in the world, He had become a part of the physical world as true man, He was subject to the usual laws governing man and his relation to the universe. And all this was true, though He had been the Creator of the world; the whole world, without reservation, with everything it contains, is His work, He made it, Col. 1, 16; Eph. 3, 9; Heb. 1, 2. But in spite of the fact that He was in the world and had created the world, the people of the world did not know Him, did not acknowledge Him. The people did not recognize their own Creator, so thoroughly is the world estranged from God. The entire world consists of people in need of redemption, and yet the majority insists upon being counted with those that are lost. The representative part of the world will not acknowledge and accept Him. Cp. 1 Cor. 1, 18—25. This is defined and explained more exactly in the next sentence. Into His own He came, to His own property, to the vineyard which His Father had planted, to the chosen people of the Old Testament. But those that belonged to Him, the men and women of His own race, that had received so many evidences of His grace and goodness, did not receive Him, were far from welcoming Him. The great mass of them rejected Him and His salvation. "The rulers in the children of Israel and the great multitude, since He did not come as they had imagined He should (for He came, simple and without ostentation, had no honor), would not acknowledge Him as the Messiah, much less accept Him, though St. John went before Him and testified of Him, and though He Himself very soon came forward, preached with power, and did miracles, that He truly should have been recognized by His miracles, Word, and preaching. But all that did not avail much. For the world nevertheless affixed Him to the cross; which would not have been done if they had held Him for what He was." 2)

But some there were, some few true Israelites, that received Him as the promised Messiah, and that therefore believed on His name, put their full trust for their salvation in Him. To receive Christ, to believe on Him, and to trust in His name, are expressions covering the same process; they are synonymous. To such as accepted the Word of the Cross He gives the great privilege or right to become the sons of God by adoption, Gal. 4, 4. 5. He works faith in their hearts. They enter into the right, the proper relation to Him, they accept Him as their Father. This process of becoming children of God is now contrasted with the corresponding process of physical birth. The children of God are produced in a wonderful way, unlike that of natural procreation and birth. In nature children are formed out of blood and body substances of human flesh and by an act of the will of man. But this birth does not make a person a child of God. The children of God are born out of God. He is their true Father; to Him alone and to no human, earthly agency, power, or will do they owe life and being, spiritual birth and existence. Regeneration is the work of God, and it is His work all alone. By their receiving this testimony concerning Christ, as it was proclaimed by John, into their heart, this marvelous change has been wrought in the Christians. God has thereby made them partakers of the divine nature. Faith, which receives the Word and Christ, is wrought by God through the Word. Thus the believers have the manner and nature of their heavenly Father: a new spiritual, divine life is found in them. And though they are not born out of the essence of the Father, like the only-begotten Son, yet by adoption they have all the rights of children. They are heirs, with Christ, of the bliss of eternal salvation, Rom. 8, 17.

Just how this was brought about, that God could gather children out of the midst of a world that did not accept His Son, is shown in that incomparably beautiful passage of the incarnation of the Word. The Word, the eternal Son of the eternal Father, became flesh, assumed the true human nature according to body and soul. And instead of appearing only at irregular intervals, He had His dwelling among us, He partook of all the joys and sorrows of a true human existence; there could be no doubt as to the reality of His humanity. While He is and remains the eternal Logos, He is yet true man, subject to time and space, in every way like unto us in all the natural needs of the flesh, only without sin. And while He did not make an open, triumphant show of the divine nature which was His even in the state of humiliation, yet, the evangelist writes, we viewed His glory. The disciples had a good and full opportunity to convince themselves by close and intimate scrutiny upon many occasions that He was truly the Son of God, the eternal Logos. He still possessed the glory, the supernatural glory, of the only-begotten Son of the Father, Ps. 2, 7. The Father had begotten Him from eternity; He became flesh in the fulness of time, retaining, however, the full control of His divinity, lower than the Father only according to His humanity. His glory and majesty, His omnipotence, omniscience, and omnipresence, which mark Him as true God, became evident time and again in His miracles; rays of His

2) Luther, 7, 1619.

glory penetrated the veil of His humanity as easily as the rays of the sun penetrate glass. Christ is therefore not only almighty God, but also almighty man; not only omniscient God, but also omniscient man; not only omnipresent God, but also omnipresent man. And this only-begotten Son, in His work as Savior, is full of grace and truth; grace and truth are concentrated in Him, they are the sum of His essence. The free and unmerited love and mercy of God is found in the person of Jesus, in whom the fulness of the Godhead dwells bodily. The manifestations of His glory are supplemented by that of His grace. There is nothing of the insincere human quality in this grace with which the Son of God accepts sinners, but He is full of truth; He is the truly good, the personification of all goodness. True grace, true mercy, the fulness of unmerited divine compassion is found in Christ, true God and man, Ps. 89, 2; 98, 2.

The closing testimony of the prolog: V. 15. **John bare witness of Him and cried, saying, This was He of whom I spake, He that cometh after me is preferred before me; for He was before me.** V. 16. **And of His fulness have all we received, and grace for grace.** V. 17. **For the Law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.** V. 18. **No man hath seen God at any time; the only-begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him.** The glory of the Messiah, of the Word Incarnate, had been testified to even by John the Baptist, and the evangelist was not the first one to call attention to this feature. He had called out loud, without fear and dread of the consequences. His witnessing and preaching had been in the nature of continual, earnest, impressive urging and pleading, in order to prepare the hearts for the reception of Christ. John had pointed forward to Jesus and His coming. Christ came after him in point of time, but He was before His herald in point of honor, authority, power, glory. In these things the Master had at once gained the ascendancy, leaving John far behind. He was prior to John, as the eternal Son of God, and His priority was evident in every respect. This testimony of John the Baptist agreed in substance exactly with that of the evangelist.

And the latter now continues his testimony. Out of the fulness of Jesus we all, all believers, have received, and grace for grace. The fount of mercy never dries up; ever and again fresh grace and mercy appears over and above that already received. Because sin abounds and ever again brings on transgressions, therefore grace and mercy must abound still more. Though we use up grace daily, there is always a new and rich supply on hand from the inexhaustible store of God, Rom. 5, 20. The river of grace flowing from the Savior is always full of water. Under the Old Covenant, indeed, the opposite of grace, merit and works, was prominent. The Law as given by Moses demanded full obedience and threatened the transgressor with temporal and eternal punishment. But Moses, though the keeper and preacher of the Law by God's command, was a mere man, and therefore the Law itself could not have lasting value in the way in which it had been in use among the Jews. But Christ is the God-man, the Word of God Incarnate; He brings grace and truth which will have an abiding place in the world Grace, the fulness of the assurance of free pardon, and truth, the Word of the Gospel which proclaims grace and mercy, and is the sum and substance of the truth and faithfulness of God, came through Jesus Christ, who came down in His own person, not only to preach the Gospel, but to be the exponent of the Gospel and make its proclamation possible. And another fact the Christians should remember. God is the essence of faithfulness and mercy toward all men. But His essence is hidden before the eyes of men. So far as the knowledge and the application of His beautiful attributes are therefore concerned, some one had to reveal them to men, otherwise the veil of Moses would have been before their eyes until the end of time. And so the only-begotten Son, He who was with the Father from eternity, and, as a matter of fact, is in eternity in the bosom of the Father, could and did reveal and proclaim the Father to us. He is of the same essence with the Father, He is one with the Father, He was intimately acquainted with the counsel of love for the salvation of mankind. And this He revealed to us, giving us thereby the correct picture of God, not one representing Him as the threatening, terrible Judge, but as the gracious Father for the sake of the Son that earned salvation for all men. Note: The proclaiming of the secrets of God was done by Christ at the same time that He was in God's bosom. While He was on earth, He was yet in the bosom of the Father; for He is in the bosom of the Father from everlasting to everlasting. In coming to this earth to assume true human nature, He did not leave the bosom of His Father. The glorious intimacy of the Holy Trinity was never interrupted.

The Testimony of John the Baptist.

John 1, 19—34.

The embassy of the Jews: V. 19. **And this is the record of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, Who art thou?** V. 20. **And he confessed, and denied not; but confessed, I am not the Christ.** V. 21. **And they asked him, What then? Art thou Elias? And he saith, I am not. Art thou that prophet? And he answered, No.** V. 22. **Then said they unto him, Who art thou? that we may give an answer to them that sent us. What sayest thou of thyself?** V. 23. **He said, I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the**

Lord, as said the Prophet Esaias. The gospel-history begins with the testimony of John the Baptist, since his preaching concerned Him whose herald he was. Cp. Matt. 3; Mark 1; Luke 3. The evangelist does not relate in general what transactions took place between the representatives of the Jews and the Baptist, but has reference to a special, definite occasion, and notes the verbal testimony given at that time. The Jews, that is, the leaders of the Jews, the members of the Sanhedrin, composed of priests, presbyters, and scribes, among whom were also some very prominent Pharisees, sent this embassy. This delegation consisted of priests and Levites, and they had certain questions to lay before him for the sake of obtaining information. The coming of John, his manner of living, the features of his ministry, all these were of such an extraordinary nature as to provoke sensational comment. Hence the question, Who art *thou?* (Emphasis on "thou.") There was a definite purpose connected with the question, for it was not an idle inquiry as to name and birth, but as to his official character. "What personage do you claim to be? What place in the community do you aspire to?" The implication was that John might be the Messiah. If so, the Jewish leaders wanted to know about it; for they deemed it their duty to keep peace in the Church. But John rejected the implication with the greatest seriousness. He expressly put from him even the suggestion of an honor to which he had no right or claim. Without the slightest equivocation or show of reluctant humility John made his confession that he was not the Christ. It would have been an easy matter for him to assume the honor, for the people would have supported him without question; but he put even the suggestion of the temptation away from him. He also rejected the honor of being called the second Elijah in the sense that his was the actual person of Elijah, returned to the world in his former flesh and blood. It had indeed been prophesied, Mal. 4, 5, that Elijah the prophet should come as the forerunner of the Messiah, that is, that a prophet in the power and spirit of Elijah would prepare the way for Christ. And Jesus expressly states, Matt. 17, 10—13, that John the Baptist was the Elijah who was to come. But because of the false understanding that the Jews had of this Elijah, John could not admit that identity without misleading them. He denied, in the third place, that he was that prophet. For the Jews understood the prophecy, Deut. 18, 15, not of the Messiah Himself, but of some special prophet, a faithful prophet, 1 Macc. 14, 41, who was to terminate the prophetic period and usher in the Messianic reign. Cp. chap. 6, 14; 7, 40. With some impatience the members of the delegation now demanded a clear answer, a positive statement. They were under obligations to bring back an answer to the Sanhedrin, and could not go back without having accomplished the object of their mission. And John now did make a definite confession concerning himself, referring to the prophecy Is. 40, 3. He was the voice of one in the wilderness, calling loudly and urgently that people should make straight and level the way of the Lord. The Messiah was about to enter, to come to His people, and Israel was to prepare the way for Him by sincere repentance. Only those that sincerely acknowledge their sins and repent of them may obtain salvation in Christ. That was the chief, the prominent part of John's ministry, to call Israel to repentance.

The question concerning John's baptism: V. 24. **And they which were sent were of the Pharisees.** V. 25. **And they asked him and said unto him, Why baptizest thou then, if thou be not that Christ, nor Elias, neither that prophet?** V. 26. **John answered them, saying, I baptize with water; but there standeth One among you whom ye know not;** v. 27. **He it is, who, coming after me, is preferred before me, whose shoe's latchet I am not worthy to unloose.** V. 28. **These things were done in Bethabara, beyond Jordan, where John was baptizing.** The sect of the Pharisees was very strict in the observance of all rules and regulations concerning worship and the proprieties of service. The testimony of John relating to his specific work did not interest them, but the authority for his baptizing was a matter of much concern to them. The Jewish leaders of Jerusalem knew nothing of this man's work; he had not asked their sanction. And so the delegates challenge his right to baptize, since by his own confession he is neither Christ, nor Elijah, nor that prophet. Since the answer to the question of the Pharisees was included in the passage from Isaiah, John was content with the opportunity of pointing to Jesus, and thus fulfilling his work. He puts himself and his baptism into deliberate contrast with Christ, and the baptism which Christ would employ in due time. John baptized with water. Through the water of baptism he confirmed and sealed his preaching unto repentance. He admonished the people of Israel that they were in need of a cleansing from sins. Those that were baptized by John confessed their sins. But still the baptism of John, though a means of grace, was of a preparatory nature; it pointed forward to the fulfilment of the redemption in Christ. And the Messiah was even then in the world, He was living in the midst of the Jewish people, though as yet unknown to them. He was the one that was after John in point of time, but in reality, and by virtue of His person and office, He surpassed His herald. And well John knew this, for he did not consider himself worthy of unlacing the straps of His sandals, and thus of performing the work of a slave for the Master. There was an unbridgeable abyss between divinity and humanity, between God and man. These things took place on the eastern side of the river Jordan, in a village or valley called Betha-

bara, at a ford which enabled travelers to cross over into Batanea. Note: John's example in confessing Christ before the enemies of true salvation should encourage the Christians of all times to stand up courageously for Christ.

John points to the Lamb of God: V. 29. **The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.** V. 30. **This is He of whom I said, After me cometh a Man which is preferred before me; for He was before me.** V. 31. **And I knew Him not; but that He should be made manifest to Israel, therefore am I come baptizing with water.** V. 32. **And John bare record, saying, I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon Him.** V. 33. **And I knew Him not; but He that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on Him, the same is He which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost.** V. 34. **And I saw, and bare record that this is the Son of God.** The very next day after the embassy of the Sanhedrin had been with John, he saw Jesus coming toward him. This incident probably took place after the temptation in the wilderness. John said, in the hearing of his disciples and such other people as may have been present at the time: Behold the Lamb of God that beareth the sin of the world. The herald proclaimed the coming of the King, undoubtedly with the passage Is. 53 in mind. Christ was the prophesied Lamb, the sacrificial Lamb, the Passover Lamb, the Lamb that was led to the slaughter. And He was the Lamb of God, He was provided by God, sent out by God, He came with God's full consent and will. In His capacity as Lamb of God, He lifts up and carries away, He puts away entirely, without leaving a trace behind, He renders full satisfaction for the sin, all the sin without exception, all the transgression with all its guilt. This bearing and taking away was a continuous work and labor. The entire life of Jesus was a bearing and atoning for sin and the guilt of sin. The sin of the world, of the whole world, He bore and took away, without restriction or reservation. "This is preaching with exceptional beauty and consolation of Christ, our Savior; we can never reach it with our words, yea, not even with our thoughts. In yonder life we shall in all eternity have our joy and delight in that fact that the Son of God humiliates Himself thus far and takes my sins on His back; yea, not only my sins, but also those of the whole world, all that have been committed since Adam, down to the very last person, — all this He assumes as having been done by Him, and He wants to suffer and die for it, in order that I may be without sin and obtain eternal life and salvation. Who can adequately speak or think of that, namely, that the whole world with all her sanctity, righteousness, power, and glory is included in sin and has no value in the sight of God, and wherever some one wants to be saved and be rid of his sin, that he knows his sins are all laid upon the Lamb's back? . . . This Lamb bears the sins, not mine or thine, or any other person's alone, nor those of a single kingdom or country, but those of the whole world; and thou art also a part of the world." 3) John identifies Christ more exactly by referring to his words of the day before. He whom I am pointing out to you, He who is here before you, He is the one that in point of human existence is later than I, but by reason of His divinity stands far in advance of me, surpasses me in every respect. Jesus was before John, had been in existence from eternity, and this attribute of eternity is confessed by John. When Jesus first came to John, the latter did not know Him personally, he was not sure as to His identity, he could not have recognized Him beyond the possibility of a mistake. Cp. Matt. 3, 14. John had known of the existence of Jesus; he had probably been told by his parents or received other revelations concerning Him whose coming he proclaimed. But His person was not known to the Baptist. This fact had nothing to do with John's ministry, which consisted in witnessing and preaching of Him, in order to make Him manifest before the people of Israel. Before Jesus could be revealed, the ministry of John should prepare the way. To Israel, as to the chosen people of God, Jesus was to be revealed first, and to that end the baptizing of John was to serve. The people, having confessed their sins and having received the assurance of pardon in baptism, would be eager for the full and complete revelation of the grace and mercy of God in the person and work of Jesus. And John had proof positive that the Man to whom he was pointing was the Messiah. For he had seen the heavens opened, and the Spirit of God descending upon Christ in visible form, Matt. 3, 16; Mark 1, 10; Luke 3, 22. That Spirit which Jesus had received upon that occasion had not left Him again, but had remained upon Him. Jesus had had the Holy Ghost from the moment of His conception, but this Spirit had been passive within Him. Now, however, by this open revelation, the formal beginning of the ministry of Christ was indicated. From that time on the Spirit of God proved Himself a living, active power in the human nature of Christ. He was anointed with the Holy Ghost and with power, Acts 10, 38. Thus the visible communication of the Spirit at the time of Christ's baptism was incidentally a preparation of Jesus for His prophetic office and work.

John now summarizes once more. He had not been personally acquainted with Christ, but when God had given him the command and sent him forth to baptize and perform all the works of his ministry, He had given him that reve-

3) Luther, 7, 1717. 1719. 1725.

lation, that definite sign by which he should distinguish with unfailing certainty the person of the Messiah. John would see the Spirit descending upon Christ, and this same person would be He that would baptize with the Holy Ghost. This was one of the functions of Christ according to prophecy. The first work of the Savior is this, that He bears and takes away the sin of the world. The second is this, that He sanctifies the sinners that have accepted His salvation through the Holy Spirit. They must be cleansed and purified of sins and all uncleanness. Hence the importance of the sending of the Spirit. And John had been an eyewitness, he was absolutely sure of what he had seen. And therefore he could now bear witness with such certainty. He could preach and proclaim with absolute definiteness that this Jesus who had received the Holy Ghost without measure was the Son of God. Note: All truly Christian preaching must have the essential content of the proclamation and witness of John. A true Christian preacher will first prepare the way for the coming of the Lord through the preaching of repentance. He that is no sinner and does not want to acknowledge himself a sinner, has no need of a Savior. But then follows the preaching of Christ, of Jesus of Nazareth, of the Redeemer of the world. Only by and through such preaching is the eternal Light revealed to men.

The First Disciples of Jesus. John 1, 35—51.

Some of John's disciples heed his testimony: V. 35. **Again, the next day after, John stood, and two of his disciples;** v. 36. **and looking upon Jesus as He walked, he saith, Behold the Lamb of God!** V. 37. **And the two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus.** V. 38. **Then Jesus turned, and saw them following, and saith unto them, What seek ye? They said unto Him, Rabbi, (which is to say, being interpreted, Master,) where dwellest Thou?** V. 39. **He saith unto them, Come and see. They came and saw where He dwelt, and abode with Him that day; for it was about the tenth hour.** The Evangelist John, as an eyewitness of all these happenings, relates them in chronological order, with an attention to detail which would not have been possible for one whose knowledge was not first-hand. All these events made a very deep impression upon the future apostle. The day following the Baptist again stood, and with him two of his disciples. And again he looked upon, fixed his eyes upon, Jesus, who was walking about near by, crossing his field of vision with the object of reaching the place where He lodged. Again John sounded forth his Gospel-message of the Lamb of God. Note: We should never grow weary either in preaching or in hearing the precious news of salvation. John had testified of Jesus the day before, without results. Here he again sounds the same glorious truths, and his words make a deep impression. For this time the two disciples heard, and also gave heed to, what he was saying. The repetition probably aroused them out of their attitude of indifference: they followed Jesus. The testimony concerning Christ will always lead to Christ, the Savior of the world. Jesus knew, according to His omniscience, that they were there; He knew also what was going on in their hearts, that they had been touched by the testimony of John. He turned and saw them following Him. He let them understand that He had noticed them. And in order to help them overcome their timidity, He began a conversation with them. He asks them what they are looking for, in order to cause them to confess, to stimulate their faith. Jesus wants no idlers nor busybodies among His followers; He desires not heads, but hearts. He wants those that contemplate discipleship under His merciful care to consider in advance what they are doing. For that reason the catechetical preparation for confirmation is indispensable under ordinary circumstances. In extraordinary cases the very thief on the cross is accepted in his last hour, but normally a Christian should be fully persuaded as to the course he is choosing in following Jesus. Cp. Luke 14, 26—33. The answer of the two men indicated the longing of their hearts. They addressed Jesus as Rabbi (which John finds it necessary to translate for the sake of his Greek readers), the name given to teachers of the Law in their synagogs, and asked Him where He was lodging. Their unspoken wish was that they might spend some time with Him. They were too self-conscious and diffident to ask Him about the matters agitating their hearts. But He understood their thoughts, the longing of their young faith. His kind invitation: Come and see, be My guests for to-day, opened the way to their hearts. They went with Him to His lodging-place. It was a memorable day for the two men, so important to John that he states the very hour when Andrew and he first approached Jesus, about four o'clock in the afternoon. They remained in conversation with Jesus during the remainder of the day and far into the night. They were His guests and had the best opportunity to become fully acquainted with Him and His message of salvation. The same eagerness to know Jesus and to hear the Word of redemption should characterize the believers of all times. The lukewarm, lazy Christianity which is becoming so prevalent in our days has nothing in common with actual, live, eager discipleship.

Missionary efforts: V. 40. **One of the two which heard John speak and followed Him was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother.** V. 41. **He first findeth his own brother Simon, and saith unto him, We have found the Messias, which is, being interpreted, the Christ.** V. 42. **And he brought him to Jesus. And when Jesus beheld him, He**

said, Thou art Simon, the son of Jona; thou shalt be called Cephas, which is, by interpretation, A stone. The name of one of the former disciples is given. It was Andrew of Bethsaida, the brother of Peter. The name of the other man is not given, but any one that reads the gospel of John carefully may read between the lines that John himself was the other disciple who here found Jesus. Now the hearts of both men were full of the happiness of their salvation. They felt constrained to let others know of the faith that was in them and of Him that inspired it. Before doing anything else, Andrew therefore set out to find his brother Simon. His heart was full, and out of that fulness his mouth spoke. He tells him that they had found the promised Messiah, the Christ of the prophecies. They, Andrew and John, were convinced that Jesus was the Christ. That conviction was the result of their conversation with Jesus. If many persons that now stand aloof from the Gospel and its teaching would only hear and read the Bible with an open mind, letting the Lord Himself talk to them, the chances are that they would be brought to the same glorious certainty. And Andrew was not satisfied with the mere telling of the news. He must needs bring his brother Simon to Jesus. The same missionary zeal should fill the hearts of the Christians to-day. There is altogether too much aloofness from the actual work of the Gospel among the members of the Christian congregations. Belief in Christ as the Redeemer, missionary talk, and missionary deed must go hand in hand. Jesus looked up as Simon approached. He uttered a word by the working of His divine omniscience. He gave Simon his correct name; He told him the name of his father, Jona, of Bethsaida; he read his character and his future, and gave him an additional name to fit the future, the Aramaic name Cephas, which is the same as the Greek name Peter. He would have need of the nature and firmness of a rock, and had better lay the foundation of his faith in the great Rock Jesus, before the dangers and trials of the coming enmity of the world would overwhelm him.

Happenings of the fourth day: V. 43. **The day following Jesus would go forth into Galilee, and findeth Philip, and saith unto him, Follow Me.** V. 44. **Now Philip was of Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter.** V. 45. **Philip findeth Nathanael, and saith unto him, We have found Him of whom Moses in the Law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.** V. 46. **And Nathanael said unto him, Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth? Philip saith unto him, Come and see.** On the fourth day of the events which are here so carefully chronicled, Jesus had planned to begin His journey up to Galilee. But as He was about to leave, He finds, by design and intention, Philip of Bethsaida. In this case, the simple command: Follow Me, was sufficient. The call of Jesus determined Philip to become a disciple of Jesus. And the call of Christ in the Gospel has at all times the power to influence men in the same way. Only we must not grow weary in sounding it forth at all times. There were now three men of Bethsaida among the four followers of Jesus. And all of them had been decided by the call of Jesus. It is not man's own free will that decides his fate with regard to Jesus, but the call of the Lord. And he that gives heed to that call, that makes his decision by the power of God in the Gospel, will ever after be in blessed communion with Jesus, in a wonderful discipleship. Philip, in turn, driven by the joy of his new discovery, of the faith of his heart, feels urged to tell his friend Nathanael (or Bartholomew) of his happiness. His words gush forth in a joyful stream: Of whom Moses wrote in the Law and the prophets, Him have we found. He had the right understanding, His faith was firmly based upon Jesus, known as the son of Joseph, of Nazareth, as the promised Messiah. Philip was well versed in the Old Testament prophecies. He referred to Moses and the prophets as having given a clear picture, in unmistakable prophecies, of Christ. And the antitype, the fulfilment of the prophecies, Philip found in Jesus of Nazareth. His knowledge was not yet perfect, but was fully sufficient for his purpose, that of bringing another man to his Master. Nathanael was skeptical. His Biblical knowledge told him that the Messiah was to hail from Bethlehem. Galilee was considered by the pure Jews as a half-heathen country, and Nazareth could not hope to produce anything good. But his dubious attitude and his slighting remark cannot overcome the faith of Philip. Instead of arguing the matter at great length, Philip simply issues his invitation: "Come and see!" Such a simple, repeated invitation and summons is often the best way of overcoming preconceived notions and opinions. If men are only led into the Scriptures and to the preaching of Christ, the rest will follow. The Word of Christ overcomes the weakness and objections of man. "He who candidly examines the evidences of the religion of Christ will infallibly become a believer. No history ever published among men has so many external and internal proofs of authenticity as this has. A man should judge of nothing by first appearances or human prejudices. Who are they who cry out, The Bible is a fable? Those who have never read it, or read it only with the fixed purpose to gainsay it. . . . God has mercy on those whose ignorance leads them to form prejudices against the truth; but He confounds those who take them up through envy and malice, and endeavor to communicate them to others." 4)

The winning of Nathanael: V. 47. **Jesus saw Nathanael coming to Him, and saith of him, Behold an Israelite indeed in whom is no guile!** V. 48. **Nathanael saith unto Him, Whence knowest Thou me?**

4) Clarke, *Commentary*, 5, 520.

Jesus answered and said unto him, Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig-tree, I saw thee. V. 49. Nathanael answered and saith unto Him, Rabbi, Thou art the Son of God; Thou art the King of Israel. V. 50. Jesus answered and said unto him, Because I said unto thee, I saw thee under the fig-tree, believest thou? Thou shalt see greater things than these. V. 51. And He saith unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man. Jesus wished to give Nathanael a practical demonstration of the truth of Philip's words. As he was approaching, the Lord said to those that were standing near Him, but so that Nathanael could hear His words: Behold in truth an Israelite, in whom guile is not. This man belonged to the small number of those in Israel that were members of God's people in truth, not merely by carnal descent, but by spiritual knowledge and faith. His hope was in the Messiah and His spiritual kingdom; he was free from guile and falsehood, the characteristic faults of the Jews. "Therefore Christ wants to say here also: There are true and false Israelites; the Israelites are of two kinds, which, indeed, are both descended from the patriarch Israel, but have not all kept the promise and the faith of Abraham. Just as there are now two kinds of Christians. We are indeed all called Christians who were baptized and regenerated through Baptism, but we do not all remain with our Baptism; many desert Christ and become false Christians, and the true Christians are few and far between. Thus there is also a true and a false Christian Church. And the false Christians boast that they are the true Church and true Christians; just as the Jews said they were the true Israelites; they boasted only of the title and name. . . . Thus there are two kinds of Christians; first, those that have the name and are Christians in their body; . . . however, they do not remain with their Baptism, forgiveness of sins, and the promise of Christ, but separate themselves through false doctrines, desert the faith and the Lord Jesus Christ. . . . But all true Christians, when they are baptized, hear the Gospel, read the Holy Scriptures, go to the Sacrament, love their neighbor. These make the right use of the Christian name and are truly Christians." 5)

Nathanael was struck at once by this evidence of omniscience on the part of Jesus, and with surprise in his voice asked Him whence He knew him. And Jesus gave him evidence not only of His omniscience, but also of His omnipresence. Before Philip had approached his friend, while the latter was sitting in the shadow of the fig-tree, Jesus saw him. And everything was known to Him. The eyes of Jesus could easily read the heart and mind of Nathanael, who may have been meditating about the strange message of the Baptist, praying meanwhile that the day of the Messiah might soon come. All this Jesus knew. The Prophet of Nazareth, who knows the counsel of men's hearts, is an omniscient man. And Nathanael was obliged to acknowledge this, at the same time drawing the conclusion that Jesus is the Son of God, and that He is the true King of the spiritual Israel, of His Church. In Jesus all the prophecies of the Old Testament were fully realized; there could not be the slightest doubt as to His Messiahship. In Him God's reign in the hearts of the believers is realized; He rules over them that are His in grace and truth forever.

The open and unequivocal confession of Nathanael pleased the Lord, but it was not yet based upon a sound enough foundation. A single demonstration of the divine power of Jesus is sufficient to work faith, but this faith must have the food from on high to feed upon, otherwise it will soon be starved. Jesus has greater things in store for His disciples, which He proceeds to tell them about with solemn emphasis. From now on, with the beginning of His public ministry, there would be a wonderful change for the believers. With His coming heaven itself is opened. The abyss of the Law has been removed, the enmity between God and man has been abolished, Eph. 2, 15. 16. Instead of that, there is now direct communication between God and man, Jesus Himself being the Mediator. Something much more beautiful than the ladder of Jacob, Gen. 28, has now united earth and heaven — the full atonement through the blood of the Savior. The angels of God are delighted to serve Him who came down for the salvation of the world. There is constant communication between Christ and His heavenly Father, in prayer, in miracles, and in other proofs of divine intimacy. And every bit of this work will be of benefit to all men, to be accepted by those that place their faith in their Savior.

Summary. *After a prolog, giving a summary of the aims of the Gospel, the evangelist relates the story of the testimony of John the Baptist regarding Jesus, and tells of the gaining of the first disciples by this testimony: Andrew, John, Peter, Philip, and Nathanael.*

5) Luther, 7, 1757. 1758.

THE DEITY OF JESUS.

There is hardly a page of Scriptures which unbelief, often parading under the name of science and truth, has not touched and soiled with blasphemous hands. But no other doctrine has so challenged the most desperate efforts of unbelievers inside and outside of the Church than that of the person and office of Christ. The question of Jesus: "What think ye of Christ, whose Son is He?" Matt. 22, 42, important at all times since the Gospel was first

proclaimed, has become a touchstone in our days; for by their answer to this question men range themselves with the friends or with the enemies of the Church of God in the real sense of the term.

Fortunately it will not be necessary to do more than merely refer to the fact that a few decades ago the very historicity of Jesus was questioned, and that some so-called Bible critics to this day do not hesitate to speak of a mythical theory of Jesus. "They assure us that in the gospels we have not got any 'tradition of a personality.' Jesus, the central figure, never existed at all, but was a purely mythical personage." 6) We refer to this in the same way that we would register the idea of some mentally deranged person that denied the existence of the sun.

Far more dangerous are such critics that assume a sanctimonious attitude and act as though they were firm believers in the Bible and all its doctrines, while, as a matter of fact, they are undermining the very foundations of Christian belief by their insidious attacks upon Christ, the Savior of the world. It is by such as these that Jesus is represented merely as a leader in social progress, as the "supreme example of genius in the realm of intellect," whose "wonderful name lifts society upward in character and culture, and will yet lift man back to His Father's side." Christ is indeed conceded a position as religious teacher, but one that "portrayed as an Infinite Father that God who holds the earth in His hand and rolls the sun like a golden ball along the pavement of the morning." Christ is pictured in wonderfully flowing language in His relation to the poet, the philosopher, the scientist, and the seer.7) But it does not seem to occur to any one to picture Christ, with equal beauty of language, in His relation to the poor sinner in need of salvation. And, with all their harping on the divinity of Christ, a great many of the modern religious leaders seem to have forgotten that there can be no salvation without the deity of Jesus assured.

We believe that Jesus Christ is true God. And, in order to summarize very briefly, let us point to only a few passages of the Bible. Jesus is, beyond the shadow of a doubt, called the Son of God, and not a son by adoption, but one born out of the essence of the Father from eternity. "Thou art My Son; this day have I begotten Thee," Ps. 2, 7; Heb. 1, 5. Mary is given the assurance: "That Holy Thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God," Luke 1, 35. 32. John expressly states of Jesus: "We saw His glory, the glory as of the Only-begotten of the Father," John 1, 14. Jesus Himself does not reject the confession of Nathanael: "Thou art the Son of God," John 1, 50, with horror, but accepts it as a matter of fact. John states it to be the purpose of His entire gospel: "These are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God," John 20, 31. St. Paul declares that "God spared not His own Son," Rom. 8, 32. And that the argument from the Sonship of Jesus to His Godhead is valid even the unbelieving Jews knew, thus surpassing many a modern critic: "The Jews sought to kill Him because He . . . said also that God was His Father, making Himself equal with God," John 5, 18.

But that is not all. Jesus is expressly and unequivocally called God; deity is actually ascribed to Him. The words of the prolog of our gospel are so unmistakable that only a flat denial can remove them and their power. John writes: "The Word was God," v. 1. He does not say that the Word was divine, but that the Word is actual, true, essential God. He says the same thing in his first epistle, when he declares that Jesus is "the true God and eternal life," 1 John 5, 20. And Jesus Himself did not refuse to be honored and addressed as God when Thomas exclaimed: "My Lord and my God," John 20, 28.

If we confine ourselves to the gospel of John alone, there is so much material to defend the deity of Christ that the sifting alone requires long and careful work. There is the testimony of the evangelist himself, chap. 1, 1—14; 2, 11. There is the testimony of John the Baptist, 1, 15—36; 3, 23—36. Cp. John 1, 37; 10, 41. 42. There is the testimony of Christ Himself, 4, 25. 26; 10, 24. 25; 9, 35—37; 13, 13; also 3, 16; 5, 17. 18; 10, 30; 8, 19; 10, 38; 14, 7—11; 5, 19; 14, 26. There is the testimony of the Father, 5, 31. 32; 8, 17. 18; 12, 23. 28; 19, 34. 35; 20, 12. There is the testimony of the disciples of Jesus, 1, 41. 45. 49; 6, 67—69; 11, 27; 20, 28; 21, 15—17. There is finally the testimony of the people, 6, 14. 15; 7, 31. 40. 41; 10, 41. 42; 12, 12. 13; 4, 42.8)

THE LOGOS OF THE PROLOG.

The opening verses of the Gospel according to St. John have given occasion to numerous expositions which refuse to distinguish between inspiration and philosophy. John's choice of a name for Christ especially has brought on a veritable flood of opinions concerning the influence of pagan philosophy upon the doctrine of Christianity. It has been stated that the evangelist tried to effect a compromise between Platonic and Stoic ideas, on the one hand, and the fundamentals of Christianity, on the other. The old Greek philosopher Plato had written much about *nous* and *logos*, and the later schools of philosophy had carried out the ideas and founded a philosophical system which, about the time that John wrote his gospel, began to be known as the Neo-Platonic. One man especially made use of the terms of Plato in the attempt to harmonize Jewish theology and Greek philosophy. That was the Greek Jew Philo, of Alexandria, Egypt, who lived from about 20 B. C. to about 42 A. D. He makes use of the term *logos* throughout his writings, sometimes in a definite, then again in a vague way, to bring out his mystical speculations. For this reason many critics have stated that John borrowed the term from Philo,

6) Conybeare, *The Historical Christ*, 15.

7) Hillis, *The Influence of Christ in Modern Life.*

8) *Syn.-Ber.*, Canada, 1891, 15—83; Nebr., 1901.

together with many of the latter's philosophical deductions.[9] But a careful comparison of the works of Philo with the gospel of John and with all other New Testament books shows that Philo's *logos* is a vague, shadowy conception, as unreal to himself, perhaps, as it is to any one else, that it is merely a philosophic conception, the joint product of a peculiar theory respecting the nature of the Deity and the fact of the existence of the material universe. "The mere thought of an incarnation of the Logos would have been in the highest degree abhorrent to the tastes and sensibilities of the Alexandrians." [10]

Other critics have identified the Logos of John with the *memra* of Jewish philosophical reflections. They refer to the Targum of Onkelos on Gen. 3, 8, who substitutes "The voice of the word of the Lord" for "The voice of the Lord God"; the Jerusalem Targum, which has, on Gen. 22, 14: "Abraham invoked in the name of the word of the Lord," and many others. Critics have even found many parallels in the Persian Zend-Avesta of Zoroaster and in other writings. But the *memra* of the Jews in their Chaldee paraphrases of the Old Testament is nothing more than the product of theological reflection, just as that of Philo is the result of philosophic speculation. It is a device invented in order to render the notion of revelation conceivable to Jewish thought. But of such an idea there is nowhere a trace in the prolog of John.[11]

The conclusion that the believing commentator is bound to reach is "that, inspired by God, the Apostle John fixed on the word Logos (which was entirely familiar to him from the inspired writings of the Old Testament, especially from Gen. 1, Ps. 33, and others) as a designation of Jesus Christ, not only because the teaching of the Old Testament suggested it as singularly appropriate, but also in order to expose the futility of the Logos theories that had sprung up in the soil of pagan and semi-pagan philosophy." "Where among Christians Logos was mentioned without further restriction, nothing else could have been meant and understood, nor intended so, than the Word which was now preached and believed. . . . But this Word is now Christ Himself: He personally is the Word which God has sent into the world, He is personally the essential, not only the final revelation. For in both respects He may be called the Word, inasmuch as He is spoken by God into the world, and inasmuch as He is now preached in the world. . . . Only one Word the apostles brought, but a Word of whom they could testify that He was with God and was God, before the world came into existence, because this is true of Christ whom they preach, and who is even now, wherever He permits Himself to be preached, the Word intended for the world, to be believed by the world, just as it was in the days of His flesh. . . . Since John begins his book with a statement concerning the Word, he surely means the Word which is now in the world for the purpose of being believed and for giving to the believers eternal life." [12]

"Further we should know that there is a Word in God, unlike my word or thy word. For we also have a word, especially the word of the heart, as the holy fathers call it, as, when a person meditates upon something and diligently searches, then he has a word or conversation with himself of which no one knows but he alone. . . . Thus God also in eternity, in His majesty and divine essence, had a word, speech, conversation, and thought in His divine heart with Himself, unknown to all angels and men. That is called His Word, which was from eternity in His fatherly heart, by which God has determined to create heaven and earth. But of such will of God no person ever knew until that same Word became flesh and declared it, as is stated afterwards: The Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him." [13]

9) Clarke, *Commentary*, 5, 522—525; *The Logos in the Fourth Gospel* in *Constructive Quarterly*, 6 (1918), 347—362; *Does the Fourth Gospel Depend upon Pagan Traditions?* in *American Journal of Theology*, 12 (1908), 529—546.

10) *Theol. Quart.*, 8 (1904), 71. 65—86.

11) *Theol. Quart.*, *l. c.*, 78; Schaff, *Commentary, John*, 55. 56.

12) Hofmann, *Schriftbeweis*, 1, 109. 110.

13) Luther, 7, 1543.

CHAPTER 2.

The Marriage at Cana. John 2, 1—11.

The invitation: V. 1. **And the third day there was a marriage in Cana of Galilee; and the mother of Jesus was there;** v. 2. **And both Jesus was called, and His disciples, to the marriage.** On the third day after the incidents which were narrated last; for so long it took for the journey from Judea, if this was made in a leisurely manner. There was a marriage with a wedding-feast, the only one of which the gospels tell us that Jesus attended. Marriage is a divine institution, and it is well-pleasing to the Lord; it is fully in agreement with His design and will that people enter into this holy estate in a proper way, and with a full understanding of its rights and privileges, as well as its duties. "Since, then, the estate of marriage has that basis and comfort, that it was instituted by God, and that God loves it and Christ Himself honors and consoles it, it should rightly be held dear and valued highly by every one, and the heart should be of good cheer in the certainty of this estate which God cherishes, and gladly suffer all that is hard to bear therein, though it were ten times as hard to bear. For that is the reason for so much trouble and displeasure in the wedded state according to the outward man, since all that is God's Word and work must experience this, that it is sour, bitter, and difficult for the outward man, if it is to be blessed. Therefore it is also an estate which exercises

faith in God and love toward our neighbor by manifold trouble and work, disinclination, cross, and various adversity, as must follow upon that which is God's Word and work." 14) This marriage was celebrated at Cana, a little town a few miles north or northeast of Nazareth, on the road to the Sea of Galilee. It is distinguished from another Cana, situated in Judea. Only the mother of Jesus is mentioned as having been there, Joseph having probably died meanwhile. For the sake of the mother, out of deference to her, both Jesus and His disciples were invited to the marriage. There were at least five men in the company of Jesus at this time, and there may have been more. Jesus had been in Judea for some time after leaving His home to be baptized of John, and the exact date of His return was not known. When He came, therefore, in the company of these other men, the number of guests was considerably increased. "The presence of Christ, with His mother and disciples, at a wedding-feast, and His performing His first miracle there, is a silent condemnation of monkish asceticism, and a recognition of the marriage relation as honorable and holy. Christianity is no flight from the world, no annihilation of the order of nature, but the sanctification of it; no moroseness of spirit, but joy and gladness." 15)

The embarrassing situation: V. 3. **And when they wanted wine, the mother of Jesus saith unto Him, They have no wine.** V. 4. **Jesus saith unto her, Woman, what have I to do with thee? Mine hour is not yet come.** V. 5. **His mother saith unto the servants, Whatsoever He saith unto you, do it.** The wedding-feast seems to have been planned and carried out on a large scale, and yet not all contingencies had been provided for. Since the increased number of guests required more wine than had been furnished, the supply was shortly exhausted. There was not a bit left to take care of the wants of the festival. In this emergency, Mary, who seems to have been a very close friend of the family, if not indeed a relative, took it upon herself to provide help. She had not forgotten the sayings and prophecies concerning her Son. She believed that He was able to help, and trusted that His willingness would not be wanting. She went over to Jesus and simply stated that one fact to Him: There is no wine. Her words implied that she was looking to Him for counsel and practical aid. Her statement is a model prayer. If we but tell our Lord what we lack and are in need of, we may fitly leave everything else to His gracious helpfulness. We should learn to trust in His mercy without the slightest doubt and hesitation. "The example of faith is very strange in this gospel. There He lets things come to the last emergency, that the want is felt by all those present and there is neither counsel nor help; wherewith He proves the manner of divine grace, that no one can become partaker of it that has sufficient and does not feel his need. For mercy does not feed those that are full and satisfied, but the hungry, as we have often said. He that is wise, strong, and pious, and finds something good in himself, and is not yet poor, miserable, sick, a sinner and a fool, he cannot come to Christ the Lord nor receive grace." 16)

The answer of Jesus seems unduly harsh. His address is that of respect, for the word "woman" was used in addressing queens and persons of distinction. But His words are those of a rebuke in form. They are a common Hebrew expression, which occurs often in the Old Testament, as Judg. 11, 12. The Lord means to say: What have we two in common in this matter? By what right do you assume that I must help? The performance of miracles was a matter of Christ's Messianic office; Mary's plea verged on the exceeding of parental authority, was tantamount, in fact, to an interference in the manner of Christ's work. "Although there is no greater authority and power on earth than that of father and mother, yet it is at an end when God's words and works begin." (Luther.) The Lord's hour for bringing relief, for revealing His glory, had not yet come. The manifestation of His might was entirely in His own hands, no matter what form, manner, and time He would choose to help. The authority of parents extends over, and governs, only the matters of this earthly life. Where divine matters are concerned, their interference is wrong. They should bring up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord and in no wise hinder them from serving God, from going to church, and placing themselves at the Lord's disposal. If parents transgress their authority in this respect, if they attempt to hinder their children in working for the Church, in following the call of the Lord for the performance of His work, it is quite right for children to resent the interference. The children, on their part, will be guided by love, and will not presume to create a want where none exists.

Mary understood her Son correctly; she found comfort in the word "not yet." She did not resent the rebuke, but accepted it meekly. She was sure His reply was not all refusal. And therefore she went over to the servants near the entrance, who were now serving at the tables, and told them to do whatever the Lord chose to tell them, — they might otherwise not have obeyed an unimportant guest, — no matter what it may be that He says, no matter what form and manner He will choose to help. Mary trusted that He would help speedily, a trust even when it seemed that trust must be foolish; preparing for help when help seemed a vain expectation. "Here faith stands in the right battle; behold how His mother does here and

14) Luther, 11, 464.

15) Schaff, *Commentary, John*, 104.

16) Luther, 11, 469.

teaches us. How harsh His words sound, how unpleasant His attitude is! Yet she does not interpret all that in her heart as a show of anger, against His goodness, . . . as those do that are without faith and fall back at the first rebuff, . . . but remains firm in her mind that He must be good. For if the mother had permitted herself to be frightened back by these hard words, she would have gone away quietly and full of discontent. But now that she commands the servants to do what He tells them, she proves that she has conquered the rebuff, and still expects nothing but pure goodness from Him." 17)

The miracle and its effect: **V. 6. And there were set there six water-pots of stone, after the manner of the purifying of the Jews, containing two or three firkins apiece. V. 7. Jesus saith unto them, Fill the water-pots with water. And they filled them up to the brim. V. 8. And He saith unto them, Draw out now, and bear unto the governor of the feast. And they bare it. V. 9. When the ruler of the feast had tasted the water that was made wine, and knew not whence it was, (but the servants which drew the water knew,) the governor of the feast called the bridegroom, v. 10. and saith unto him, Every man at the beginning doth set forth good wine, and when men have well drunk, then that which is worse; but thou hast kept the good wine until now. V. 11. This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth His glory; and His disciples believed on Him.** The number of the water-pots would be immaterial but for the fact that the evangelist wants to bring out the greatness of the miracle and the largess of Christ in providing such a rich present for the bridal couple. The water-pots held two or three firkins apiece, for upon this occasion there was a great deal of water needed; each measure being equivalent to nine gallons, the combined capacity of the water-pots may well have been 120 gallons. The pots were standing there, they had their accustomed place near the door, after Oriental and Jewish custom, the guests either washing their feet themselves, or, if servants were present, having their feet washed upon entering, after their sandals were removed. Jesus now went over to the entrance-hall and told the servants to fill the pots with water. Either the water had all been used for the guests, or Jesus wanted clean, fresh water, the water being specified in view of what was to follow. Note: Jesus makes use of natural tools and vessels, does not command angels to bring wine from heaven. Christ wants to help and bless, but men should use the means which God has given them. The servants were careful to obey the order of Jesus literally. They filled the jars to the very brim; no room was left for adding anything to the water. Jesus then had the servants draw out some of the liquid contained in the jars, as a sample for the chief steward, caterer, or inn-keeper, the man that had charge of the physical needs of the guests in the line of eating and drinking. And here came the surprise. For when the chief steward tasted the wine in the vessel submitted for his approval, he supposed that the groom had sent him this sample of a fine wine which he had kept back as a surprise, for it was exceptionally good wine, Jer. 2, 21. Only the servants were in the secret, and they did not tell. So the ruler of the feast sent for the bridegroom to instruct that man as to custom and propriety. He informed the astonished groom that it was the invariable rule to serve the finer grades of wine first, and after their inebriating effects were becoming evident, when the guests were in a condition in which they were unfit to discriminate between good wine and bad, then he might bring forth the less good. As one commentator has it: "The ignorance of the ruler of the feast commends the fine quality of the wine; the knowledge of the servants proves the truth of the miracle." Note: The action of Jesus upon this occasion is absolutely at variance with the demands of a false temperance. The miracle of Jesus was evidence of His almighty power, but also incidentally of His love. It was not absolutely necessary for the guests to have wine, especially as some had been served. Nevertheless, it was a disagreeable situation, and Jesus was glad to help them out of the difficulty. That is His pleasure at all times, that not only the great and pressing needs of men engage His help, but also the small embarrassments of life. Our trust in His kindness and love should be unlimited. This beginning of miracles did Jesus; Jesus performed this as the first of His miracles. All those ascribed to Him in the apocryphal gospels, as having taken place in His childhood and youth, are mythical. His ministry had begun with His baptism, the revelation of His glory began at Cana, with this miracle. He revealed His glory, the glory peculiar to Him. Even as man, in the state of humiliation, He possessed the glory, the majesty which is God's. It was the work of the almighty Creator to change the creature according to His will. And His disciples believed on Him. They realized that this was a revelation of His glory. They had known Him as the Messiah and had put their trust in Him. But now their faith received a solid foundation, it was strengthened mightily. They were now absolutely certain that this was the promised Savior. Note: That is one of the purposes of the miracles, of the signs of the divine glory, to strengthen faith. We should believe the Word of the Lord and permit this faith to be strengthened also by the recital of the miracles of Christ. Knowing that Jesus did so many wonders in the days of His earthly

17) Luther, 11, 470.

sojourn, we are sure that He is able to perform also that miracle of bringing us to faith and keeping us in the faith to the end, as well as having all the powers of earth serve us, whether by the laws of nature or not.

The First Purging of the Temple and Its Results. John 2, 12—25.

A brief stay at Capernaum: V. 12. **After this He went down to Capernaum, He, and His mother, and His brethren, and His disciples; and they continued there not many days.** John, in accordance with his purpose of supplementing the account of the first three gospels, has only brief references to the Galilean ministry of Jesus, narrating here only the important point that Jesus made Capernaum His second home. The location of this city on the shores of the Sea of Galilee, on the chief caravan road between Damascus and the Mediterranean Sea, made it a distributing center, a nucleus for all Galilee. The Apostle Paul followed Jesus in this, that he made the chief cities the centers of influence for his missionary work. Jesus was not alone on this trip. His mother Mary accompanied Him, as also the few disciples whom He had gained in Judea, who at this time, or shortly after, returned to their former occupation. His brothers are here mentioned with great definiteness. Cp. Matt. 12, 46; 1, 25. "Here people are concerned how Christ the Lord could have had brothers, since He was the only son of Mary, and the Virgin Mary was not the mother of any more children. Therefore some say that Joseph, before he married Mary, had a wife, of whom he begot children, who were afterwards called brothers of Christ the Lord; or that Joseph had another wife in addition to Mary, which was permitted to the Jews that they had two wives at the same time. . . . Since, then, these were begotten of Joseph and the other woman, they would be half-brothers of Jesus. This some have alleged; but I prefer to take the part of those that say that brothers here means cousins; for the Jews and the Scripture call cousins brothers. But let this be as it may be, not much depends upon it; it gives nothing to faith, nor does it take anything from faith, whether they were cousins or brothers, begotten of Joseph; they went down with Him to Capernaum." 18)

The first purging of the Temple: V. 13. **And the Jews' Passover was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem,** v. 14. **and found in the Temple those that sold oxen and sheep and doves, and the changers of money sitting;** v. 15. **and when He had made a scourge of small cords, He drove them all out of the Temple, and the sheep, and the oxen; and poured out the changers' money, and overthrew the tables,** v. 16. **and said unto them that sold doves, Take these things hence; make not My Father's house an house of merchandise.** V. 17. **And His disciples remembered that it was written, The zeal of Thine house hath eaten Me up.** Jesus was a circumcised member of the Jewish Church, and He was very strict in observing its rules and laws. Since the male members of the nation were required to be present three times a year in Jerusalem, at Passover, at Pentecost, and at the Feast of Tabernacles, He was probably present at each celebration. At the Passover festival the deliverance from the bondage of Egypt was commemorated. But when Jesus came to Jerusalem, He was deeply grieved by the evidences of contempt of all holy things which was paraded before the eyes of all visitors. Since it was impossible for many Jews to bring their sacrificial animals to Jerusalem from their distant homes, the practise had been sanctioned of permitting them to buy the sheep and lambs and bullocks and doves at Jerusalem. It was a profitable business, and one which brought the leaders of the Jews, who controlled the concessions, many a welcome piece of money. Instead, however, of keeping the market in the lower part of the city, it had been brought up to the gates of the Temple, and finally into the very courts of the sanctuary. There were the stalls of the oxen and sheep, there were the coops of the doves, there were also the tables of the bankers, where they made change. So a regular market was conducted in the courts and halls of the Temple, with all the accompanying noise, haggling of the venders and buyers, lowing of the cattle, bleating of the sheep, clinking of the coins, and shouting of children. Jesus was not satisfied with a mere protest, which might have been received with jeering and insults. He quickly braided a scourge out of reeds or cords that could easily be procured in such a busy mart, not to employ it as a whip, but to swing it as a symbol of power and to drive out the animals with it. Incidentally, He turned over the tables of the bankers, of the money-changers, causing the small change to roll in every direction. And to the sellers of doves, who were equally guilty with the rest, He gave the command to carry all the paraphernalia of their business away from there; for the house of His Father should not be made a market-house, where marketing, buying and selling, trading and bartering, was carried on. It was an exhibition of zeal for pure and uncontaminated service of God. Cp. Ps. 69, 9. Christ was consumed with His zeal for the honor of His Father. And no man dared to withstand Him. They all gave way and went out of the court with their property. Some of the Lord's divine glory and power must have been evident in His bearing, which caused them to shrink before the fire in His eye. Jesus wanted to show that He was the Messiah, the Lord, who must cleanse and purge His people of all abominations. And He showed also that such bartering and trading and marketing in the sanctuary is extremely distasteful to Him.

18) Luther, 7, 1776.

In this He ought to be an example to all Christians, especially to pastors. "The more pious a pastor or preacher is, the more zealous he will be." (Luther.) Every servant of Christ, every believer, should be zealous for the purity of the house of God, of the Christian congregation, in order that it may not be contaminated by great sins and offenses.

There are commentators who claim that John destroyed the chronology of the gospel-story altogether by inserting this story at this point, for they maintain that there was only one purging of the Temple. But the story of John follows chronological lines, and there is no reason for not assuming two cleansings of the Temple. "But they are questions and remain questions which I do not want to solve; and nothing much depends upon it, only that there are many people that are so keen and sharp-witted and bring forth so many questions, desiring exact speech and answer upon them. But if we have the right understanding of Scriptures and the right articles of our faith, that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, suffered and died for us, then we do not miss much, even if we cannot answer every question that is otherwise asked. The evangelists do not observe the same order; what one has at the beginning, the other occasionally has at the end. . . . It may very well be that the Lord did this more than once, and that John describes the first purging, Matthew the second. But be that as it may, whether it be first or last, whether it happened once or twice, it takes nothing away from our faith." 19)

The challenge of the Jews: V. 18. **Then answered the Jews and said unto Him, What sign showest Thou unto us, seeing that Thou doest these things?** V. 19. **Jesus answered and said unto them, Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.** V. 20. **Then said the Jews, Forty and six years was this Temple in building, and wilt Thou rear it up in three days?** V. 21. **But He spake of the temple of His body.** V. 22. **When therefore He was risen from the dead, His disciples remembered that He had said this unto them; and they believed the Scripture, and the word which Jesus had said.** The Jews resented the implication of authority; it meant that He claimed for Himself a supernatural origin or mission, either as a prophet or as still more. So they demanded some sign, some special manifestation, some extraordinary revelation, which would give evidence of His authority. "The blindness of the Jews is enough to put external evidence forever out of repute. They never will see the sign in the thing itself. The fact that Jesus by one blow accomplished a much-needed reform of an abuse over which devout men must often have sighed, and which perhaps ingenuous Levites had striven to keep within limits, the fact that this unknown youth had done what none of the constituted authorities had been able to do, was surely itself the greatest sign." 20) Jesus therefore gave them an answer which fitted their foolish demand. His saying was meant to be puzzling. Jesus always spoke in parables when He wished to be understood by the spiritual and to baffle the hostile. "Those who cross-question Him and treat Him as a subject to be investigated find no satisfaction." The sign which Jesus proposed to them was that they should destroy this temple, and in three days He would raise it up. Cp. John 10, 18. It was the Lord's first reference to His death and resurrection. The Jews in their blindness did not understand the statement in its true sense, but supposed that He was referring to their sanctuary, to the wonderful Herodian Temple. They point to the fact that this great structure, with all its buildings, approaches, porticoes, and chambers, had been in course of construction for a matter of forty-six years at that time. Herod began work on the Temple in the year 20—19 B. C. "The old Temple was taken down and the new one erected in the course of eighteen months. But much remained to be done, and the work dragged along until after Herod's death. . . . It was finished only in 64 A. D., six years before it was finally destroyed." 21) To tear down this building and erect it anew in the short space of three days was obviously beyond human conception. But Jesus had stated correctly the great sign of His authority, His death and resurrection for the atonement of the world's sin. Although Jesus, therefore, spoke of the temple of His body, which was in truth the temple of the living God for all times, though He Himself is the great sanctuary of mankind for all times and His body comprises the mercy-seat and all the other sacrificial appointments of the true temple for the believers of all times, the Jews did not understand Him. They attempted to use this prophecy against Him two years later, upon the occasion of His trial before the high priests. Even the disciples did not understand the saying at that time; in a way they were just as ignorant as the Jews. But they remembered it after the Lord's resurrection, and at that time drew their conclusions correctly. Then they understood and believed also the corresponding Scripture-passages of the Old Testament. Mark: A Christian must never grow weary in comparing type and antitype, prophecy and fulfilment; for only in that way will he gain the full and firm conviction that Jesus Christ is truly the Messiah of promise, the Savior of the world.

The result of Christ's manifestation in Jerusalem: V. 23. **Now, when He was in Jerusalem at the Passover, in the feast-day, many believed in His name, when they**

19) Luther, 7, 1781.

20) *Expositor's Greek Testament*, 1, 709.

21) Barton, *Archeology and the Bible*, 208.

saw the miracles which He did. V. 24. But Jesus did not commit Himself unto them, because He knew all men, v. 25. and needed not that any should testify of man; for He knew what was in man. Since the Passover festival in the wider sense, including the days of Unleavened Bread, lasted for eight days, and since there were pilgrims in Jerusalem from all parts of the Jewish country at that time, Jesus had the best opportunity to reveal Himself by word and work. And the result was that many believed on His name. For the time being, at least, they had the firm conviction that He must be the promised Messiah. And they were strengthened in their conviction by the signs, by the miracles in and through which He revealed His glory. But faith resting on external, physical miracles alone has not the foundation it should have; it should have the basis of the Word alone. Therefore Jesus on His part did not commit Himself. He did not enter into such close relationship with these people as with His disciples, who were gained by His Word only. Christ will commit Himself to the man that commits himself unreservedly to Him. He put no faith and confidence in these people. He had a deeper knowledge of man. He knew that, for the most part, their faith was of a transitory character. There are always many such persons, in the very midst of the Church, as believe for a time only. Human beings cannot see into their hearts and foretell how long faith will last. But Christ knows. He had no need, it was not necessary, that any one should testify with regard to man, humanity in general, for human nature with all its foibles and weaknesses was very well known to Him. He knew the motives, governing ideas, and ways of man. He was the omniscient God; He knew their inmost thoughts and desires, He also had a knowledge of what would happen later. Note: This proof of the divine omniscience is a warning to the people that make their Christianity a desultory, haphazard manifestation, with only occasional attendance at church and a corresponding use of the Sacrament. The Lord knows the heart. And this same quality is a source of comfort to all sincere Christians. He knows the weakness of the human heart, and will surely come to the aid of those that firmly trust in Him alone.

Summary. *Jesus performs His first miracle at the marriage-feast of Cana, establishes His headquarters at Capernaum, goes to Jerusalem for the Passover, purges the Temple for the first time, and answers the challenge of the Jews.*

CHAPTER 3.

The Visit of Nicodemus. John 3, 1—21.

The call by night: **V. 1. There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. V. 2. The same came to Jesus by night and said unto Him, Rabbi, we know that Thou art a teacher come from God; for no man can do these miracles that Thou doest except God be with him. V. 3. Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.** Here is an incident from the happenings of this Passover week which shows the Savior's kind and searching love. There was a certain man in Jerusalem that belonged to the Pharisees, the sect of the Jews which was peculiarly zealous for the keeping of the traditions of the elders. The Pharisees were leaders of Jewish thought, many of them, if not all, teachers, but strongly imbued with the idea of self-righteousness. This man, Nicodemus, not only belonged to them, but he was even a member of the Sanhedrin, the highest council of the Jewish Church, chap. 7, 50. He came to Jesus by night, partly because he feared his colleagues, whose enmity toward Jesus was evident from the first, and partly because he wanted to be undisturbed. He felt a growing dissatisfaction with the manner in which the Jewish leaders were condemning Jesus. He believed that this new Teacher had a wonderful message and should be heard; he had a desire to know more of His message. Addressing Jesus in a very respectful way, he frankly tells Him that he himself and the party he represented, probably a few earnest souls in the otherwise hostile council, knew, they had come to the conclusion, that Jesus was a Teacher come from God. They recognized in Him a divinely commissioned Teacher, which does not imply an understanding of Christ's miraculous origin. These Jews to whom Nicodemus belonged had simply drawn their conclusions from the evidence before their eyes. God had confirmed the teaching of Jesus by miracles of a kind that brought conviction. They were no tricks or sleight-of-hand performances, but such wonders as indicated the power of God beyond all question. There could be no doubt of God's being with the man that could perform such miracles. The knowledge of Nicodemus went so far as to recognize in Jesus a prophet on a level with those of the Old Testament, but it did not go so far as to accept Him as the Messiah. The position of Nicodemus is shared by many so-called Christians of our day. Their confession of Jesus is entirely in conformity with reason. They believe Him to be a great Teacher, they praise His doctrine. But they do not want to acknowledge Him as the Savior of the world. The statement of Nicodemus was a feeler. He indicated that he and his party were inclined to go still farther in their belief; he suggested

that Jesus should express Himself as to His actual position and intentions. The idea of a temporal Messianic kingdom was always foremost in the minds of the Jews. But Jesus solemnly declares that an inquiry of this nature, and with that probable end in view, was useless without an understanding of the manner of the entering into the kingdom of God. Unless a person comes into being, is born, anew, again, is made over entirely into a new creature, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God which Jesus is preaching so earnestly. Without such complete regeneration a participation in the joys of the true kingdom of God is impossible. No one can be saved unless he is regenerated. Nicodemus, like all the Pharisees, believed that he could be saved by the works of the Law. His view is shared by millions of misguided people to-day. To be worthy of heaven by one's own merits, that is the aim of all modern Pharisees. But the demand of Christ differs radically from that assumption. It overthrows all self-righteousness and pride completely. It insists upon a complete change in the moral condition of a man, a thorough and all-including transformation of the heart, of the mind, of the will of a person, which also must become evident in a new manner of living, so that such a person, in his thinking, willing, feeling, in words and in works, is a new man. Without such regeneration no one can enter into the kingdom of God.

The mode of regeneration: V. 4. **Nicodemus saith unto Him, How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter the second time into his mother's womb and be born?** V. 5. **Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.** V. 6. **That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.** V. 7. **Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again.** V. 8. **The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.** The statement of Jesus, simple as it was, was at the same time so thoroughly at variance with the commonly accepted idea as to the way of getting to heaven that it almost took the Pharisee's breath. His question reveals his utter inability to grasp the idea of the Lord to its full extent. He knew, of course, that a physical rebirth was impossible. He understood that Christ's reference was to a spiritual transformation. But just such a change in the field of morality seemed to him impossible, verging on the ridiculous, preposterous. How can a person, especially one of advanced years, deny the habits and customs of years? If that is to be done, then every person must really begin his life all over again, just as he came into the world. The very suggestion is unthinkable from the standpoint of reason, just as the idea of conversion, of regeneration, is preposterous in the opinion of the average self-righteous person. And therefore Jesus explains, once more with solemn emphasis, that the rebirth out of water and Spirit is absolutely essential, it is a prime prerequisite, for the entering into the kingdom of heaven. Spiritual regeneration by Baptism, through which the Spirit of God is given, is unavoidably necessary. Baptism is the means by which the Holy Spirit works regeneration, the new birth. Conversion is therefore in no way the work of man, but it is the work of God the Holy Ghost. To be born again or anew is to be born out of the Spirit, to receive from Him a new heart, a new mind, a new will. To gain this object, God uses Baptism as one of His instruments. This Sacrament actually works and gives new life; the water is not merely a symbol, but an actual means, through the power of the Word, in working salvation. But one that has been converted in this way, and has thus become a partaker of the grace of God, thereby enters into the kingdom of heaven, into the invisible Church; for the kingdom of God and the kingdom of heaven are identical. That this demand of an absolute regeneration is well founded is proved by the fact that all men, as they are born into the world, are flesh; theirs is a sinful, corrupted nature, alienated from God, hostile to God. The carnal-mindedness of natural man is enmity toward God. It is an irreconcilable contrast: all men carnally born, from carnal parents, by nature flesh and filled with the same sinful affections as the parents in their nature, and, on the other hand, that which comes into existence by the creative work of the Spirit in conversion, the new man, filled with divine life, with divine power from above, through the working of the Spirit. He that is born of the Spirit has the Spirit's manner; his heart, mind, and will are directed to God and to that which pertains to God; such a one, and he only, is fit for the kingdom of God; he alone can receive the kingdom of God with its heavenly gifts and blessings. It should therefore not be a cause for wonder that a new birth is required for entrance into the spiritual kingdom. To natural man, indeed, it is a marvel, something that he can never fathom and understand, in just what way the Spirit of God works. But this indispensable requirement stands for all those that are born of the flesh: they must be born anew. No amount of quibbling and arguing will change that fact. The Lord tries to make His meaning clear by an example, by a phenomenon in nature. There is the wind: it blows where it chooses; it comes, it goes, — and sound as a physical concept is well known, — but the beginning and end, the why and wherefore of the laws of nature are unknown, just as it is impossible for mere man to understand creative power. The blowing of the wind is done in absolute independence of any man's will; no one can govern and fix its direction. And just so it is with the working of the Spirit

of God: the process of regeneration cannot be ascertained by the application of the senses; that is a mystery of God. Only the results are apparent, and they are often of a nature to make us marvel. The regenerated person shows an entirely different manner than before his conversion. What he shunned before he now seeks; and what he sought and loved before he now hates. He is a new, a different person, all by the power of the Spirit. "As the wind is free, not bound to any place, person, or time, so also the Holy Ghost. Just as the wind moves, drives, comforts, and penetrates everything, so it is also with the working of the Holy Ghost." 22) Note: The Holy Ghost does His work how and when He wishes to; He does His work in His own peculiar way. But we men are bound by the external means which He has given us: we must use His Word and Sacrament to obtain the gifts of His grace.

The witness from above: V. 9. **Nicodemus answered and said unto Him, How can these things be?** V. 10. **Jesus answered and said unto him, Art thou a master of Israel and knowest not these things?** V. 11. **Verily, verily, I say unto thee, We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen; and ye receive not our witness.** V. 12. **If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe if I tell you of heavenly things?** V. 13. **And no man hath ascended up to heaven but He that came down from heaven, even the Son of Man which is in heaven.** Nicodemus could not understand yet, and so proceeded to ask a human explanation of a divine phenomenon. He wanted to know how these things could be; he wanted a plausible exposition. His personal conviction was that it was impossible for God and His Spirit to accomplish such results, to make a man entirely different from what he was before, actually to regenerate him. Jesus begins His explanation with an exclamation of surprise at the bewilderment of the Pharisee. For Nicodemus was a teacher in Israel, he held the position of a scribe, who was supposed to be well versed in the Law. The subject of regeneration is treated so often in the Psalms and in the visions of the prophets that a teacher of the people should have been thoroughly familiar with its full import. Bad enough for the pupil, for the ordinary Israelite, to be so blind; what, then, shall be said of a master that shows such obtuseness! Cp. Ps. 51, 12; Ezek. 11, 19. The scribes and Pharisees of the time of Jesus no longer understood the Scriptures. They clung to the outward letter, while the true sense was hidden from them. Most emphatically, therefore, the Lord declares that His case is not one of ignorance and denseness. He has a first-hand, thorough knowledge. He speaks such things as He knows; and what He has seen and is continually seeing as the eternal, omniscient Son of God, that He bears witness of. He speaks with divine authority of the miracle of regeneration as well as of the inner mysteries of the Triune God. And Jesus knows in advance that His word will not be accepted, His witness will not be believed. Not only Nicodemus, but all men that are like him in their position toward divine revelation are so blinded by their reason that they cannot understand. Of things pertaining to this life challenging their attention Jesus had spoken, of regeneration and sanctification; and not even those did they credit, much less have faith in His words. But if they could not understand the easier, the more tangible, that which ought to engage their attention at once, what would be the result if Christ should begin to teach of matters not open to human observation and experience, things wholly in the unseen, the essence and purposes of God? Of those things He could speak and testify of His own personal experience. No human being has ever dwelt in heaven and thus gained a knowledge of heavenly things. One only has dwelt there and is able to communicate the true knowledge concerning God and all divine matters. The Son of Man, the God-man, in His great work of atonement, has come down from heaven to be a witness of heavenly things. And for this He is fully qualified, for He is still in heaven; He is in the closest, the most intimate connection with the two other persons of the Godhead, even though His body is walking the earth in weakness and humility. Christ here states expressly that He was in heaven from the beginning, for else He could not have come down; that He has now come down for the purpose of testifying of heavenly things; that He is still in heaven, also according to His human nature, as the Son of Man. Cp. chap. 1, 18. And finally, the time is coming when He will return to heaven, when His human nature will be finally and fully translated into the heavenly glory and majesty. "Flesh and blood cannot get to heaven; only He ascends up to heaven that came down from heaven, in order that the government over all may be in His hand. Whatever lives He can kill; and what is dead He can make alive; what is rich He can make poor. Thus it is here resolved, whatsoever is born of flesh does not belong into heaven. But this ascending into heaven and the coming down was done for our benefit, in order that we, who are carnal, might also get to heaven, but with this form, that the mortal body first be killed." 23)

The purpose of Christ's coming: V. 14. **And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up,** v. 15. **that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life.** V. 16. **For God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son, that**

22) Luther, 12, 1907.

23) Luther, 11, 1160.

whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. V. 17. For God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. The act of Moses in the wilderness, in erecting the brazen serpent before the eyes of the stricken people, was typical, symbolical, Num. 21, 1—9. The people that had been bitten by the fiery serpents and then looked upon this symbol in faith were healed, and the poison had no effect upon them. Jesus is the antitype of the brazen serpent. In accordance with the divine counsel of love, in which He Himself had taken part, the Lord took upon Himself the obligation that He also should be elevated upon a tree before the eyes of the whole world. There are three points of similarity between type and antitype in this story. The brazen serpent of Moses had the form and appearance of the poisonous reptiles after which it was modeled, just as Jesus was revealed in the form of our sinful flesh, had the needs and ways of an ordinary human being, was finally punished as a criminal. Just as the brazen serpent, however, had no poison, was altogether harmless, so Jesus, though in appearance like unto sinful men, was without sin, holy, harmless, undefiled. A strange curse was resting upon Him, and for the sins of others, imputed to Him, He hung upon the cross. And finally, just as he that looked at the brazen serpent in faith remained alive, so also every sinner that has been poisoned by sin in its various forms, but now looks up to Jesus, the Savior, in simple, trusting faith, shall not perish, shall not be punished with everlasting destruction, but have eternal life. For in Christ all sin has been conquered, all guilt has been taken away: there is complete redemption in Him. This thought Jesus now repeats in a burst of Gospel-preaching which is without equal in the world's literature, which, in fact, summarizes the entire Gospel in one short sentence. With the full emphasis of adoring wonder Jesus exclaims: For so God loved the world, so much, so greatly, so beyond all human understanding. The greatness of God's love is such as to call forth this cry of astonishment even from the Son of God, the Savior Himself. God loved the world, God is the Author of salvation, 1 Tim. 2, 3. He loved the world, all the people living in the world, all that make up the human element in the world: there is none excepted. He proved this love with a deed so wonderful, so surpassingly beautiful, that it cannot be brought out strongly enough in words of human speech. God gave His only-begotten Son as a free gift and present for the whole world. And such is His will and intention that He makes no exception: Every one that believes in Him shall not perish, shall not see destruction, but have everlasting life, the life in and with Jesus that shall have no end, but consists of bliss and joy through countless ages. What a contrast: the holy, eternal God and His equally holy and eternal Son giving the highest and best for the world, for the fallen, corrupt humanity, for the bitter enemy of God! The death of the Son of God is the punishment for the sins of the world; the Son of God dies that the world, all the people in the world, might live in all eternity. God's death, God's blood, was thrown into the scales in payment for the sins of the world. And there is nothing to be done on the part of sinners but to accept this atonement in faith; for faith accepts and appropriates the redemption of Christ. And the believer has eternal life even now, even here in time. He is sure of his salvation, because it is based upon the work of Jesus the Savior. "What shall, what can He do and give more? For since He gives His Son, what does He hold back that He does not give? Yea, He gives Himself altogether, as Paul says Rom. 8, 32: Who spared not His own Son, how shall He not with Him freely give us all things? Surely all must be given with Him who is an only-begotten, dearest Son, the Heir and Lord of all creatures; and all creatures must be made subject to us, angels, devils, death, life, heaven and earth, sin, righteousness, things present and things to come, as St. Paul again says, 1 Cor. 3, 22. 23: All things are yours; and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's." 24) Jesus emphasizes the glorious fact of salvation also by bringing out the same truth in a negative statement. The mission of Jesus as the gift of God to the world was not to condemn the world, though the latter had richly deserved such condemnation. Though He Himself is the Holy One of God, yet He would not, in His capacity as Savior of sinners, judge and condemn them. The sole purpose of His coming was the salvation of the world. Thus Nicodemus heard from the mouth of Jesus the complete account of the way of salvation, a salvation which is absolutely all-encompassing.

The contrast between light and darkness: **V. 18. He that believeth on Him is not condemned; but he that believeth not is condemned already because he hath not believed in the name of the only-begotten Son of God. V. 19. And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. V. 20. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved. V. 21. But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God.** Jesus did not come to condemn the world, and yet the bulk of the world is condemned. This is neither the will nor the fault of Jesus, however, but that of the unbelievers themselves. The believer accepts the redemption of Christ, and thereby is saved from the judgment of damnation. Just

24) Luther, 11, 1098.

as gaining mercy is a matter of God's grace, so believing is a free gift of His hands. But though the same gift was gained for, and is offered to, the unbeliever, he refuses to believe in the name of the only-begotten Son of God. And therefore this unbelief condemns him. By his unbelief he deliberately excludes himself from salvation, from eternal life. All men whom the judgment of condemnation strikes have only themselves to blame, since they refuse to accept the Redeemer and His atonement. Unbelief is thus the sin of sins, for it rejects the salvation which has been gained and is offered for all sins. There is a distinguishing mark, a touchstone, for all men in the fact that the true Light, Jesus the Savior, has come into the world, is now present before the eyes of men. Jesus was sitting before Nicodemus at that time, and He is present just as truly now, in His Gospel. But the majority of men did not, and still does not, pass the test. They find no pleasure in the Light nor in the illumination of His Gospel. They prefer the darkness of sin and unbelief. They have no love for the light and for the Author of light. They want nothing of Jesus the Savior. Their sin is no longer the result of ignorance, but of deliberate choice and preference. Their whole life and their works are evil, are the results of their love of darkness and its deeds. They are offered light, but they prefer to remain in darkness; they are offered salvation, but they prefer damnation. The unbelievers hate the light because their works are morally rotten, they will not bear exposure. Such is their dull, senseless, sullen objection to light that they shun it with all their might. They fear the revelation of their sinful, shameful, paltry, ugly, vulgar deeds and the subsequent reproof. They want to continue their base activity in murky darkness, where nothing of the radiance from above can reach them, as they think. It is a pity that men prefer their sin and its deeds even now, when Jesus has come to bring them deliverance from its bondage. This is a most impressive warning not to submit to the tyranny of sin, not to serve sin in any form. On the other hand, he that does the truth, that performs the deeds of truth, lives in accordance with the demands of purity, honesty, integrity, does the works that flow from a regenerated heart, such a one comes to the light. He is glad to have his works revealed in order that they may speak for him. For they are in reality not his own, nor are they done for his own glorification, but they are done and performed in God, who giveth both to will and to do according to His good pleasure. Those are truly good works that are done in communion with God. The strength, the ability to do them must be found in God and come from God. They bear the divine character. It is impossible for an unregenerate person, for an unbeliever, to perform good works. Truly good works can be done only by him in whom the Lord has kindled faith, who lives in and with God. Note: This statement of Jesus is a strong argument for the performing of good works. God works faith, God gives strength to do truly good works, God has the glory for them, and this he shares with us by giving us an ever greater amount of light of understanding. "Now we, in our turn, may not remain without works, as the impudent heads say: Why, then I shall do no good work any more that I may be saved. Yea, thou darest not do any more that serves for salvation; for forgiveness of sins, for the redemption of the conscience, thou hast enough in thy faith; but thy neighbor has not enough, him thou must also help. Therefore God also lets thee live, otherwise people would soon be compelled to take off thy head. But therefore livest thou that thou with life servest not thyself, but thy neighbor." 25)

John's Second Testimony of Christ.

John 3, 22—36.

Christ's ministry and John's baptism: V. 22. **After these things came Jesus and His disciples into the land of Judea; and there He tarried with them and baptized.** V. 23. **And John also was baptizing in Aenon, near to Salim, because there was much water there; and they came and were baptized.** V. 24. **For John was not yet cast into prison.** After the conversation with Nicodemus and after the days of the Passover Jesus left Jerusalem, but not Judea. He went out into the rural districts with His disciples, and there He spent some time with them. He had an opportunity at this time, when He was not yet so well known, to begin His special instruction of His disciples. Incidentally, His disciples performed the rite of Baptism in His name. The ministry of Jesus was not carried out on a large scale as yet, but the work of the Baptist had yielded some fruit. And John also continued his work, for men could still be prepared for the reception of the Messiah by his preaching and baptizing. He had at this time moved up the river into Samaria, almost to the boundary of Galilee. Here was the town of Salim, Gen. 33, 18, and some seven miles north of it Aenon, the place abounding in springs. And the people continued coming; his ministry was still very successful; they still desired to be baptized by the prophet of the wilderness. This work John continued till he was thrown into prison by Herod Antipas, the tetrarch of Galilee. Then only did the public ministry of Christ in the full sense of the term begin. The Lord indeed had shown Himself to the people, in Cana as well as in Jerusalem. But it was only after John's removal that He began His work as the Prophet of Israel on a large scale. In the mean time, His Baptism was also one of repentance unto the remission of sins. The

25) Luther, 11, 1092.

members of the Jewish Church should repent; they were in need of a purging from sins, which they could find in Christ, the Savior only.

The dispute concerning purifying: V. 25. **Then there arose a question between some of John's disciples and the Jews about purifying.** V. 26. **And they came unto John and said unto him, Rabbi, He that was with thee beyond Jordan, to whom thou barest witness, behold, the same baptizeth, and all men come to Him.** V. 27. **John answered and said, A man can receive nothing except it be given him from heaven.** V. 28. **Ye yourselves bear me witness that I said, I am not the Christ, but that I am sent before Him.** V. 29. **He that hath the bride is the bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice. This my joy therefore is fulfilled.** "Then," at that time, in consequence of the proximity of the two great teachers, there arose a searching questioning, a dispute. On the one side were John's disciples, of whom many still clung to him in spite of his first testimony concerning Jesus, and on the other were one or more Jews, probably some that had received instruction and had been baptized by the disciples of Jesus in His presence. The question concerned the significance of Baptism, the relation of the two baptisms to each other and to the Jewish washings, and whether the true baptizing and cleansing from sins was to be found with John or with Jesus. The disciples of John brought the matter to the attention of their master, not without some show of jealous resentment against Jesus. They do not mention His name, but describe Him as the one that had been with John on the other side of Jordan, concerning whom John had given a testimony. They were much wrought up over the fact that this man was baptizing, and that all the people were showing a strong inclination to go to Him. They could not understand that Jesus should baptize as well as John. As a matter of fact they should have been surprised that John continued his baptizing after Jesus had made His public appearance. John continued his work only because he believed that by his preaching and testifying he could serve Christ better than by following Him as His disciple. And he here took the opportunity of bearing witness of Christ once more. A man can take nothing, cannot assume rights, powers, privileges, and can have no success, no abiding success in his labors, unless it come to him from heaven. This is a general truth which finds its application in the case of Christ as well as in that of John. God has given to each one his special work to do. And it is therefore God's doing that so many people are now turning to Jesus. Note: If any man does anything in the kingdom of God, that is the blessing of God. It is not like in the field of human endeavor, where each person selects the work that suits him best, and then expects results in proportion to the labor and ability expended. In the work of the Kingdom God alone gives the increase.

John therefore calls upon his disciples to bear witness to the fact that he has not presumed upon the rights of Christ. He had given a plain and unequivocal answer that he was not the Christ, the promised Messiah, but merely His forerunner. They should have been prepared for that which was now happening before them. John emphasizes this in a parabolic saying. Christ is the Groom; to Him the Church, the bride, belongs; to Him all the believers will turn and cling by faith. It should not occasion surprise, but should be deemed self-evident, that poor sinners that are seeking help and salvation turn to Christ. To Him the souls belong. He has come to gain, to win, the souls of the sinners for Himself. John, as the friend of the Groom, stands by; he is satisfied with a secondary position; he is glad to be a mere listener. He rejoices greatly, with great joy, because the voice of the Groom is now heard in His invitation to all sinners to come to Him, the Redeemer. He has the fulness of this joy present with him, since Christ has come. The fact that men were turning to Jesus proved to John that his difficult task of preparing the way for the Messiah had not been performed in vain. There was not even the hint of a feeling of rivalry or jealousy in the words of John. It was all pure, unmixed joy and happiness at the success which was attending the ministry of Christ.

The value of Christ's testimony: V. 30. **He must increase, but I must decrease.** V. 31. **He that cometh from above is above all; he that is of the earth is earthly, and speaketh of the earth; He that cometh from heaven is above all.** V. 32. **And what He hath seen and heard, that He testifieth; and no man receiveth His testimony.** V. 33. **He that hath received His testimony hath set to his seal that God is true.** V. 34. **For He whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God; for God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto Him.** V. 35. **The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into His hand.** V. 36. **He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life; and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him.** The conclusion which John draws from the facts as stated by him is simple: Jesus must grow; that is a necessity connected with His work. And in the same proportion John must become less and smaller. John, the friend of the Bridegroom, points to Jesus, and urges all sinners to cling to Him alone. This is the motto of all true servants of the Lord. They see the fulfilment of all their hopes and expectations in the fact that the people in the congregations do not cling to the pastor's person, but accept the Word that is preached to them and put their trust in that alone.

So far as the content of the statement is concerned, it makes no difference whether the last words of the chapter are spoken by John the Baptist or written by John the Evangelist. Jesus, who is characterized by the fact that He came down from above, from heaven, stands not only over John the Baptist, but is superior to all. He is above everything, omnipotent; everything is put into His power, under His feet. John and all earth-born preachers, in spite of their high calling, are still only of the earth, can only speak in the humility of earthly ability. What John preached and testified, though a testimony of Christ and heavenly truth, yet was something which he had not gotten out of himself, but by revelation of God. But Christ's origin must be referred to a higher, to a unique source. Though found in the likeness of a mere man, yet He is come down from above; He has a supernatural, a divine origin, as a result of which His supremacy is universal. And what Jesus speaks He does not declare as the mouthpiece of some one else, but as heavenly truth out of His own essence. His testimony is concerning things which He has seen and heard from eternity, which He knows to be true as the counsel of God for the salvation of men. But in spite of this fact the testimony of Christ shares the fate of Gospel-preaching in general. So universal is the disregard of His testimony that till now practically no one wants to accept it; a relative statement. But the fact that any one receives the message of Jesus is to such a one a seal, and causes him to confirm with absolute certainty that God is Truth. The inherent power of God in the Word has a strength of conviction above and beyond any mere human persuasion. He that receives the testimony of Jesus thereby believes in God. And for this he has good reasons, for that Christ whom God has sent speaks the very words of God: the fact of His speaking in itself contains the assurance that God's words are being spoken. For God has not given the Spirit to Jesus only in a measure, but He has poured out upon Him the fulness of His Spirit, Ps. 45, 7. The Spirit of God, which lives in Christ, speaks out of Him, and therefore there is no measure, no limit to the heavenly wisdom which issues forth from His mouth. And the love of the Father for the Son has prompted Him to give Him not only the Spirit, but to commit all things into His hand. There is a measureless communication of all the fulness of divine power and authority from the Father to the Son. We have here a glimpse into the secret of the Trinity. The Father from eternity gives to the Son His Spirit, and the Son receives all things from His Father in His human nature, also the Spirit. And therefore the Spirit is that of the Son as well as that of the Father; He proceeds from both the Father and the Son. And thus, by the working of the Triune God, faith is given, by which, in turn, eternal life is a definite possession and in no wise doubtful. It is faith in the Son that assures eternal life. By faith in the Son every believer appropriates to himself all the gifts and possessions of the Son. But he that refuses to believe the Son, that will not accept the Gospel-message for his salvation, will not see the life which is earned and prepared also for him, will not become a partaker of that life in any form. He will remain in spiritual death, and the wrath of God, which is upon all the children of unbelief, will continue upon him. To be under the wrath of God without ceasing, that is the death which will plunge all unbelievers into eternal damnation on the Day of Judgment. That is the curse which unbelief brings upon itself

Summary. *Jesus preaches the doctrine of regeneration by the water and the Spirit to Nicodemus, teaches His disciples, and has them baptize, and thus gives John the opportunity for a last great testimony concerning His mission.*

CHAPTER 4.

Christ and the Woman of Samaria.

John 4, 1—42.

On the way to Galilee: V. 1. When therefore the Lord knew how the Pharisees had heard that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John, v. 2. (though Jesus Himself baptized not, but His disciples,) v. 3. He left Judea, and departed again into Galilee. V. 4. And He must needs go through Samaria. V. 5. Then cometh He to a city of Samaria which is called Sychar, near to the parcel of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph. V. 6. Now Jacob's well was there. Jesus, therefore, being wearied with His journey, sat thus on the well; and it was about the sixth hour. Even at this early day the Pharisees were watching the activities of the Lord with jealous eyes. His growing popularity gave them much uneasiness. And there was a disquieting factor also for Jesus in the situation. The testimony of John and His own teaching had their effect in bringing an ever-increasing multitude to His baptism, which He, however, did not administer in person, but through His disciples. While there was not the slightest intimation of unpleasantness on the part of John the Baptist, there was still the danger of invidious comparisons, and Jesus apparently had no intention of interfering with the ministry of John at this time or ever. But the Pharisees, as Jesus found out, had heard the news that He was making

more converts than John. These self-righteous hypocrites were declared opponents of the truth and therefore also of John, the teacher of truth. Should they therefore hear that the baptizing of Jesus was having such extraordinary success, they might be constrained to assume that Jesus was acting in opposition to John. This result Jesus wanted to avoid, and therefore, with a fine tact, which deserves wide imitation, He left Judea and set out for Galilee. He was not so sensitive about contamination from contact with Samaritans as many Jews were, who, for that reason, usually took the road on the other side of the Jordan when traveling to Galilee. Jesus took the shortest route, and thus was obliged to travel through Samaria, the country between Judea and Galilee. Samaria took its name from the city Samaria, or Shomron, 1 Kings 16, 24. When Shalmaneser, in 722 B.C., carried Israel away into Assyria, a small number of the inhabitants remained in the country. To these were added heathen from Mesopotamia, and the result was a mixed population, in whose midst Jehovah was still nominally adored, but who also worshiped the gods of the heathen. When the Jews returned from their captivity, the Samaritans made an attempt to join them, and when this effort proved unsuccessful, they built a temple on Mount Gerizim. Their religion, in which they accepted only the Pentateuch as the inspired Word of God, was a strange mixture of Judaism and paganism. The territory of Samaria at the time of Christ was included in the tetrarchy of Archelaus and was under the procurator Pontius Pilate. On the north and east was the country of Herod Antipas, Galilee and Perea.

On His journey north with His disciples, Jesus came to the little city of Sychar, which was located almost in the center of Samaria. Near this town there was a piece of land which the patriarch Jacob had given to his son Joseph in addition to his share of the country, Gen. 48, 22. It was on this piece of land that Joseph was buried. And here was also a well or cistern which Jacob had dug after his return from Mesopotamia. The well, which is now known as Jacob's Well, is within ten minutes' walk of the present village of Askar. It is about a hundred feet deep and is protected by a wall and a coping. Jesus, being a true man, had become very tired — literally, tired out — by the long journey of the morning; for it was now high noon. So He sat down at the well, either on the low wall which served as a railing, or on one of the steps leading to the water's edge.

The beginning of the conversation: V. 7. **There cometh a woman of Samaria to draw water. Jesus saith unto her, Give Me to drink.** V. 8. **(For His disciples were gone away unto the city to buy meat.)** V. 9. **Then saith the woman of Samaria unto Him, How is it that Thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria? For the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans.** V. 10. **Jesus answered and said unto her, If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give Me to drink, thou wouldest have asked of Him, and He would have given thee living water.** While Jesus was sitting there, exhausted, hungry, and thirsty, there came a Samaritan woman out of the city to draw water from the well, the work of the Oriental women to this day. Here was an opportunity to do work in the interest of saving a soul, and Jesus took good care to make use of the chance. He deliberately began a conversation with the woman, by asking her for a drink of water. Time and occasion were auspicious, since they were undisturbed, the disciples, as the evangelist notes, having gone to the city to buy food for the little company. The woman was surprised at the request of Jesus. In her astonishment she asks how it came about that He, of whom she could tell that He was a Jew, yet asked this favor of her who was a Samaritan. The evangelist explains this by saying that there was no communication between Jews and Samaritans, the hostility going so far as to exclude even all courtesies by the way. Cp. Luke 9, 53. But Jesus has no time for racial prejudices when there is a chance to speak of the heavenly wisdom. Instead of being surprised at the question, the woman should have turned right around and, on her own part, made a request. If she had any idea of the fact that the gift of God in the person and work of Jesus is free for all men: if she had an inkling of the beauty and glory of that gift; if she were aware of the identity of Him that had spoken to her, she would waste no time in idle questions as to proprieties. She would have begged Him at once most urgently and eagerly, and He could and would have given her living water. Jesus here testifies of Himself, of His own person. Living water, in the spiritual sense, from Him, the fountain of life, a water to refresh the soul, a water that gives life. Christ's Word and His salvation, which are given freely according to the grace and mercy of God, were here offered to the woman of Samaria. Incidentally, Jesus challenged the curiosity of the woman by emphasizing living water. The pool before them was probably rainwater, gathered here from the surrounding hills. But the water which He had in mind was far from being stagnant: it had life and strength in fulness.

The explanation of the living water: V. 11. **The woman saith unto Him, Sir, Thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep; from whence, then, hast Thou that living water?** V. 12. **Art Thou greater than our father Jacob, which gave us the well, and drank thereof himself, and his children, and his cattle?** V. 13. **Jesus answered and said unto her, Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again;** v. 14. **but who-**

soever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life. V. 15. **The woman saith unto Him, Sir, give me this water, that I thirst not, neither come hither to draw.** The Lord had gained His first object; He had awakened the curiosity of the woman; He could now expect to draw her out. The dignity of His speech and bearing caused her to address Him as Lord, but her answer showed that she was very skeptical about His ability to perform what He had promised. He had no vessel to draw water with, and the cistern or well was too deep for Him to get water without the aid of such a vessel; how could He, then, produce water, and living water, that is, water from a spring, at that? In this way, the woman understood His words as referring to physical, earthly water only. If Jesus could give her living water at this place, that is her argument, then He must be greater and mightier than Jacob, whom the Samaritans also, having Israelitish blood in them, regarded as their forefather. Jacob had done much for them in providing this well, out of which he himself had drunk, and his children, and his cattle. If Jesus could give the Samaritans better water than that of this well, then He must be a greater, mightier man. The understanding of the woman was altogether carnal. Jesus therefore tries to open her understanding by an explanation. Every person that drank of the water of that well would become thirsty again. The physical thirst of a person may be quenched for a little while by a drink of water. But the water to which He is referring is not that which is drunk with the mouth. It is of a nature that it quenches one peculiar thirst forever. In all eternity such a person will never be bothered by thirst again; for the water which He proposes to give will become in him that drinks of it a fountain of water bubbling up into eternal life. His gift is living water with the power to produce life and to keep bubbling with life and strength, and thus daily producing new power, enabling the possessor to gain eternal life. All the thirst, all desire and longing of people, is satisfied forever by this water; for that is His salvation, which He has brought and proclaimed. That alone can fully satisfy the heart. The salvation which Christ gives works a new, a spiritual life, and this life is fully realized and completed in eternity. The Lord's purpose to arouse interest, to stimulate desire for this wonderful water, was successful, though the woman did not yet understand what He was referring to. Her one concern is that she may be saved the trouble of coming out here every day to draw water and then to carry it home the long distance. The two qualities of the Lord's water have attracted her: the fact that it quenches thirst forever; the fact that it bubbles up ever anew and needs no drawing.

A disconcerting request: V. 16. **Jesus saith unto her, Go, call thy husband, and come hither.** V. 17. **The woman answered and said, I have no husband. Jesus said unto her, Thou hast well said, I have no husband;** v. 18. **for thou hast had five husbands, and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband; in that saidst thou truly.** Jesus, throughout the conversation, showed the true missionary's skill. He had properly prepared the woman's mind to listen to Him as to one that might have a message worth listening to, and not mere idle talk to dispense. The next step is to bring her to an understanding of her sin, to a realization of its guilt. To this end Jesus tells the woman to call her husband, her legal spouse. He knew her heart, mind, and circumstances as well as she did, and better. The woman was struck by the question, but answered quite frankly: A husband I have not. This was a truthful answer, but did not go far enough. And therefore Jesus disposes of her doubtful meaning by emphasizing: Well hast thou said, A husband I have not. She had had five husbands, and had left them all in quick succession. The matter of divorces in Palestine at the time of the Lord was fast approaching the condition in which momentary likes or dislikes decided a woman's choice. This woman was now living with a man without the formality of a marriage ceremony, or at best in a common-law marriage. The Lord told her all this, by His omniscience, for the purpose of making her realize her sinfulness, of making her see the depth to which she had fallen. She must become fully conscious of her guilt against the Sixth Commandment and the entire Law before she would have the proper desire and longing for the riches of Christ's salvation. Note: It is always thus when the Lord converts a sinner. At first there are only a few faint sparks of penitence, which would be extinguished without the aid of the Holy Ghost. But then He deepens the consciousness of transgression and guilt, in order that the longing for salvation may be instilled by the sweet message of salvation, by the Gospel. Very often the real battle in the heart of a person begins only after the desire for salvation has been felt. Then Satan tries to drive the sinner into despair. It is then that grace must much more abound.

A question as to true worship: V. 19. **The woman saith unto Him, Sir, I perceive that Thou art a prophet.** V. 20. **Our fathers worshiped in this mountain; and ye say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship.** V. 21. **Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe Me, the hour cometh when ye shall neither in this mountain nor yet at Jerusalem worship the Father.** V. 22. **Ye worship ye know not what; we know what we worship; for salvation is of the Jews.** V. 23. **But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshipers**

shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth; for the Father seeketh such to worship Him. V. 24. **God is a spirit; and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth.** The revelation which Jesus had just made astonished and disconcerted the woman. She had probably never given the matter of her loose living a serious thought, since the marriage-tie at that time was considered anything but binding. Yet Christ's way of putting it in such a naked, unvarnished way struck her conscience with peculiar force. Her words were therefore a confession of guilt, though veiled to some extent. She states, first of all, that she now understood and had the conviction: I see that a prophet Thou art. His knowledge of her sins compelled this admission. But she is sensitive upon the subject and would rather not go into details. Not that she was not conscious of guilt, for she had already shown some degree of longing for salvation. Her question rather showed how deeply she was moved. Since this man was a prophet with the Spirit of omniscience, he would surely be able to give the solution of the standing problem of Samaritan religion, one which had now been bothering them for almost six centuries. She wanted to know where the living God was to be found and which was the true worship. She knew that forgiveness was to be found only with the living God. It was the question of a serious seeker after truth. The Samaritans had for centuries worshiped their god, whom they also called Jehovah, on Mount Gerizim, which was situated near Shechem and Sychar. There had formerly been a fine temple on this mountain, which, however, the Jewish ruler Hyrcanus had destroyed in the year 125 B. C. Since that time the temple had not been completely restored, the Samaritans being satisfied to worship in the ruins. But, on the other hand, as the woman correctly states, the Jews claimed that Jerusalem was the only place where people should worship, Ex. 20, 24; Deut. 12, 5; Num. 9, 5; Deut. 16, 3. 6. Now she wanted to know who was right, the Samaritans or the Jews. The Lord answers with one of the greatest and most far-reaching announcements of all times, earnestly inviting the woman, at the same time, to give full credence to His weighty words. The time was coming, was even now dawning, when the old earthly, outwardly visible forms of worship would no longer be reckoned as essential. Both places of the Old Testament cultus, that of Mount Gerizim and that of Jerusalem, would then be forsaken. This took place shortly after Christ's ascension. Then the apostles went out and founded a great many congregations, not only in Judea, but also in Samaria. Then the Samaritans that came to faith deserted Mount Gerizim and worshiped the true God in Jesus Christ the Savior. Incidentally, however, Jesus states that there is a difference, even now, though this difference lay not in the place, but in the object of worship. The Samaritan religion had received so many additions through the influence of the heathen religions that the God whom they still designated as Jehovah was in reality a figment of their imagination, just as the gods are which are worshiped by the lodges of the present day. He that rejects any part of the revelation of God will very shortly lose all light, all understanding. With the Jews it was different. They knew the true, living God. To the Jews God had revealed Himself not only in the Law, in the five Books of Moses, but also in the prophecies. All the books of the Old Testament were read and explained in the synagogs, and the true Israelites, accordingly, worshiped the true God. The services in Jerusalem were still the right services, as commanded by God. And the reason for this mercy of God, the reason why He had permitted them to keep the right form of worship in Jerusalem, was because by His will and intention salvation was to come from the Jews. The Messiah Himself was a Jew according to the flesh. When salvation had come, when Christ had fully earned the salvation through suffering, death, and resurrection, then the special time of grace for Israel alone was at an end, then salvation was preached throughout the world. With the coming of Christ the hour of God had come in which the external worship of God at Jerusalem must give way to the true service of God. Then those that worship and pray in truth would pray to the Father in spirit and in truth. Jesus purposely calls the true God Father, for He is now the Father of all believers through the merits of the Savior, His Son. All true believers call upon that God whom they know as their merciful Father, who is reconciled to them through the blood of Christ. The New Testament worship is not dependent upon external forms, sacrifices of animals, prescribed forms of altars and appointments, etc., but is done in the spirit; it depends upon the condition of heart and mind. And it is done in truth, it is the only true, stable, sound method of worshiping. The Father is anxious to have such people as worship and serve Him in this manner, as give Him evidence of the religion of Christ in their hearts, for He Himself is a spirit. God is an invisible being, with reason and will, with self-consciousness and power; He is a personal God. And in accordance with His person He wants to be worshiped in spirit and in truth. He that will worship God properly must direct his spirit, heart, mind, thoughts to Him, must deal with Him and speak with Him as one person with another. That intimate personal intercourse, without any intervening priesthood, that direct dealing of the believer with his heavenly Father, is a characteristic of the New Testament worship. Only believers can therefore truly pray. Such as have no knowledge of, and no belief in, the reconciliation of mankind through the blood of Jesus have no communication with God. Note: We have in these words of Jesus a glorious revelation concerning the

true God as the Father of the believers through the reconciliation made by His Son. Through such messages the Lord intends to awaken and strengthen faith in the hearts of all men and trust in God as their true Father.

Belief and missionary effort: V. 25. **The woman saith unto Him, I know that Messias cometh, which is called Christ; when He is come, He will tell us all things.** V. 26. **Jesus saith unto her, I that speak unto thee am He.** V. 27. **And upon this came His disciples, and marveled that He talked with the woman; yet no man said, What seekest Thou? or, Why talkest Thou with her?** V. 28. **The woman then left her water-pot, and went her way into the city, and saith to the men,** v. 29. **Come, see a man which told me all things that ever I did; is not this the Christ?** V. 30. **Then they went out of the city and came unto Him.** The woman had listened to Jesus with increasing understanding, not unmixed, however, with some measure of bewilderment over the depth of wisdom which lay in the words of Jesus. But the drift of the Lord's speech seemed to be that the time of Messianic glory was about to be revealed. Now the Samaritans had some dim and uncertain idea of the promised Messiah out of the Pentateuch. And the woman now voices her hope in this Messiah, who is called the Christ; with His coming, she knows, all type, symbol, and prophecy would be at an end, for He would bring them a full and complete message, clear and unmistakable to their understanding, without type and external worship. Jesus now revealed Himself to the woman in a few simple words: I am He, the man that is speaking with thee. Jesus is the one Savior that can and will give to all men the full Gospel of salvation; He is the Savior of the world. There was no danger in this announcement of the Lord in Samaria; for, unlike the Jews, the Samaritans did not regard the promised Messiah as a king who was to inaugurate political changes, but as a prophet and teacher who would give them the full revelation of God's Word and will. But the plain words of Jesus had taught the woman the true meaning of the Messiah, and she, the sinner, believed Him to be the Savior of sinners. Just as Jesus had revealed Himself to the woman, His disciples returned from the city with the food that they had bought. The fact that Jesus was speaking with a Samaritan woman caused them to wonder as to the reason for this unconventional behavior. And yet none of them inquired as to His object in speaking with her or as to the subject of the conversation. They had learned so much that they must not interfere with His methods. But the woman, now that the interruption had taken place, forgot the object of her coming to the well. She was so excited over the revelation she had received and so anxious to tell her news in the city that she left her vessel standing at the well and hurried cityward. The faith which had just been kindled in her heart yearned for expression, it constrained her to become a missionary for the Lord. She went away to the city, where at this time of day there was an intermission in labor, and where groups of men could easily be found. Her missionary call was: Come and see! Cp. chap. 1, 46. And she based her invitation upon the fact that Christ had uncovered her past to her. Her saying was not an unconscious declaration of her sin. It was a humble confession of sin, combined with a free confession of her belief in Jesus as the Messiah. The people of the city should come and see for themselves whether this was not the Christ. She is sure that they will gain the same conviction which she has gotten from her interview. Note: That is always the first fruit, the first result, of conversion, that a person acknowledges himself to be a poor sinner and confesses Jesus, his Savior. The woman's announcement was not without results: the men left the city and came to Jesus. A missionary may not have the quick success which the woman here was pleased to see, but the word of confession concerning the Savior, the proclamation of the Gospel, is never without fruit; it will not return to the Lord void.

The harvest in the kingdom of God: V. 31. **In the mean while His disciples prayed Him, saying, Master, eat.** V. 32. **But He said unto them, I have meat to eat that ye know not of.** V. 33. **Therefore said the disciples one to another, Hath any man brought Him aught to eat?** V. 34. **Jesus saith unto them, My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me, and to finish His work.** V. 35. **Say not ye, There are yet four months, and then cometh harvest? Behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest.** V. 36. **And he that reapeth receiveth wages and gathereth fruit unto life eternal, that both he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together.** V. 37. **And herein is that saying true, One soweth, and another reapeth.** V. 38. **I sent you to reap that whereon ye bestowed no labor; other men labored, and ye are entered into their labors.** In the mean time, between the woman's leaving the well and the men's coming from the city, a little incident took place at the well which gave Jesus an opportunity to impart to His disciples some very necessary instruction. The disciples having brought food, they begged their Master to eat, and thus to renew His strength after the exertions of the morning. As true man, Jesus not only became tired and exhausted at times, but He ordinarily was obliged to partake of food to sustain His life. But here He had apparently forgotten all about His fatigue. He tells the disciples that He has food to eat of which they know nothing. The Lord made use of every possible chance to raise the minds of the apostles to heavenly things through the medium of

earthly matters. But the disciples, with the usual carnal understanding which they exhibited, thought only of earthly food and of the possibility of some one's having brought Him something to eat in their absence. In this sense they discussed the matter among themselves. Jesus, therefore, explains to them wherein His food consists. That is food and drink, complete sustenance to Him, if He does the will of His Father that sent Him, and completes His work. Jesus is sustained by the feeling which He has concerning the world's need of salvation. It was the Father's, the entire Godhead's, will from eternity that this salvation should be gained for fallen mankind, and Jesus wanted to carry out the work imposed upon Him by that counsel of the Godhead. Jesus tries to make His meaning clear to His disciples by an illustration taken from facts before their eyes. Jesus had gone to Judea in April for the festival of the Passover. About nine months He had spent in the southern province. It was now about December, four months before the beginning of harvest. The disciples should pay much closer attention to the spiritual harvest. Lifting up their eyes, they could see the men of the city coming to seek Jesus. Here was a field white for harvest. The Samaritans were ready for the message of the Gospel unto their salvation, the harvest of their souls could soon be gathered in. They were the firstlings out of the great mass of the heathen. That they turned to Jesus was a sign that the great harvest among the heathen of the world was at hand. And this fact was of great importance to the disciples, who were supposed to be reapers in this great harvest of souls for the kingdom of God. He that gathers the harvest, by doing so gets his reward; and in the spiritual kingdom the reaper, the messenger of salvation, gathers fruit unto life eternal. In the great harvest festival, therefore, which will be held in heaven, both the sower and the reaper will rejoice together. Cp. 1 Cor. 3, 6—8. In the case of the Samaritans, the disciples, as reapers, almost trod on the heels of the great Sower, Jesus. In general, it is a great truth that finds its application in the kingdom of Christ: One man has the joy of sowing, another that of reaping. Jesus Himself had done the work of a sower in Judea, and the disciples had had the joy of baptizing many that were convinced by the Word of the Master. It is a truth which always holds true in the preaching of the Gospel. One pastor sows the seed of the Word, the older generation of people work to bring the Gospel to others, and, as a rule, they see but little of the results. But in later years, after the preliminary work has achieved its object, the successors reap the results in wonderful measure.

Faith as personal conviction: V. 39. **And many of the Samaritans of that city believed on Him for the saying of the woman, which testified, He told me all that ever I did.** V. 40. **So when the Samaritans were come unto Him, they besought Him that He would tarry with them; and He abode there two days.** V. 41. **And many more believed because of His own word;** v. 42. **and said unto the woman, Now we believe, not because of thy saying; for we have heard Him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Savior of the world.** The woman did her missionary work well. She spoke with such earnestness and conviction that she persuaded many of the people of the city. Their faith was the result of the woman's testimony, even before they saw and heard Jesus Himself. If we only, individually and collectively, see to it that the Gospel is proclaimed throughout the world, we may rest assured in advance that the blessing of God will attend our efforts, and that there will always be some that will come to faith and acknowledge Jesus as their Redeemer. And the testimony of the woman caused also the petition of the Samaritans that the Lord should stay with them. For two days they were privileged to have the Savior in their midst. He taught these souls that were hungry for salvation; He gave them the information which they needed concerning His person and work. And the harvest was rich and plentiful. A great many more were gained through the preaching of Jesus, who frankly told the woman that they no longer believed on account of her narrative. They themselves had heard the words of eternal grace, they had the firm knowledge and conviction that this man was not a mere teacher or prophet, but that He was truly the Christ, the Savior of the world. That is the simple, but unshakable certainty of Christian faith. That is the right faith, that we do not only believe to be true what we hear in regard to the wonderful spiritual experiences of others, but that we have the personal conviction regarding Jesus that He is our Savior.

The Healing of the Nobleman's Son.

John 4, 43—54.

The passing into Galilee: V. 43. **Now after two days He departed thence, and went into Galilee.** V. 44. **For Jesus Himself testified that a prophet hath no honor in his own country.** V. 45. **Then, when He was come into Galilee, the Galileans received Him, having seen all the things that He did at Jerusalem at the feast; for they also went unto the feast.** Jesus was constrained by the earnest prayers of the Samaritans to spend two days in their midst. But after that He continued His interrupted journey. He wanted to reach Galilee as soon as possible, an intention which He supported with a proverb: A prophet in his own fatherland has no honor. It was either that He referred to Judea, where His birthplace was situated, and where He had done His first public work, but where the Pharisees were even then showing

their hostile attitude more strongly every day; or He had Galilee in mind, for there was situated Nazareth, His home town, and there was little danger of His being too highly honored and of gaining a popularity which would result in a collision with the Pharisees. But His reception in Galilee left little to be desired. Many Galileans had been at the last Passover festival and had witnessed the wonderful things which Jesus had done at that time, and they were very glad to have this Prophet in their midst. As one commentator has it, they received Him on account of His fame in Jerusalem, the metropolis, which set them the fashion in their estimate of men and things. But it was not a longing for the Savior of sinners that actuated them at this time, but merely a curiosity to see and hear more of this great countryman of theirs that had dared to purge the Temple in the very presence of the mighty of the nation.

The nobleman's plea: V. 46. **So Jesus came again into Cana of Galilee, where He made the water wine. And there was a certain nobleman, whose son was sick at Capernaum.** V. 47. **When he heard that Jesus was come out of Judea into Galilee, he went unto Him, and besought Him that He would come down and heal his son; for he was at the point of death.** V. 48. **Then said Jesus unto him, Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe.** V. 49. **The nobleman saith unto Him, Sir, come down ere my child die.** V. 50. **Jesus saith unto him, Go thy way; thy son liveth. And the man believed the word that Jesus had spoken unto him, and he went his way.** The first stopping-place of Jesus in Galilee was Cana, where He had performed His first miracle, now almost a year ago. Undoubtedly, the young married couple whose wedding-feast He had honored by His presence and by His miraculous gift was delighted to have Him visit them once more. But while He was still in this little town, Jesus received a visitor from the lowlands, from Capernaum, an officer of Herod Antipas, the tetrarch of Galilee. This Herod was the son of Herod the Great, who had received the title of king from the Roman senate, an honor which the son likewise hoped to obtain. This officer had heard that Jesus had returned from Judea, and immediately set out for Cana, where he went to Jesus and begged Him to come down from the mountainous section, where Cana was situated, to the lowlands of the Sea of Galilee, where Capernaum was located. He considered the presence of Jesus absolutely necessary for the cure of his son, who was about to die, who lay at the point of death. The Lord gave the man an answer which purposely sounded harsh: If signs and wonders you do not see, you will not believe. Jesus had been performing miracles, deeds which were outside of the usual course of nature, which often contradicted and set aside the laws of nature. And these wonders were also signs, they indicated beyond doubt the divine power, the omnipotence of His person. If faith is based only upon evidence of external help, upon signs and wonders, it has no sound basis. Not as a Worker of miracles, but as the Prophet of truth Jesus wanted to be accepted. "How can this be made to agree? Thus, as I said before. For faith and firm confidence brings the nobleman to Christ; how, then, does He say: You believe not unless you see signs? But, as I have said, He wants to show the man that his faith is not yet strong enough; for he still clings to seeing and feeling the presence of Christ." 26) Note: That cannot be accepted as true faith, if a person wants to believe only because of signs, and refuses to believe if no miracle is in evidence. If a Christian says: Unless God will help in my present trouble, I shall not believe, he proves that his so-called faith is a matter of imagination. The nobleman in this case received the reproof of Christ's words meekly, but he was not deterred from his purpose. His faith was gaining strength, he was not so easily diverted and discouraged. He repeated his prayer for the Lord to come down lest his boy die meanwhile. But he is still wrong, inasmuch as he persists in the idea that it is necessary for Jesus to be present in person to perform the healing. He had as yet no knowledge of the omnipotent power of the Lord, which is not bound by place and time. But Jesus, in recognition of a faith which, though weak, was yet sound, bade the father return to Capernaum. His son lives, and will live. Christ did not go with him. His cures are independent of His bodily presence and of any material media. And now the man believed the word of Jesus. "His first immature faith has grown into something better. . . . On Christ's word he departs home, believing he will find his son healed." 27) Although he saw nothing of that which Jesus had told him, the officer was fully satisfied with what he had heard. That is always true advance in faith, when a person believes the simple Word of God, even if there is not the slightest evidence of fulfilment of the promises. "Therefore I have said that all else must be rejected, and one must cling to the Word alone; if we have taken hold of that, then let world, death, sin, hell, and all misfortune rage and storm. But if you give up the Word, then you are bound for destruction." 28)

Faith vindicated: V. 51. **And as he was now going down, his servants met him, and told him, saying, Thy son liveth.** V. 52. **Then enquired he of them the hour when he began to amend. And they said unto him, Yesterday at the seventh hour the fever left him.** V. 53. **So the father**

---

26) Luther, 11, 1764.
27) *Expositor's Greek Testament*, 1; 734.
28) Luther, 11, 1767.

knew that it was at the same hour in the which Jesus said unto him, Thy son liveth; and himself believed and his whole house. V. 54. **This is again the second miracle that Jesus did when He was come out of Judea into Galilee.** The officer did not reach home that evening any more. But early the next morning he was met by some of his servants with the joyful news that his son was alive and doing well. It is a fine testimony for this master that his servants thought so much of him as to set out with their glad tidings at once. The careful official now insisted upon finding out the exact hour when the sickness had receded from his son and left him well. And when they told him that it had been on the day before, at one o'clock in the afternoon, he knew that it was at just that time that Jesus had spoken the words of reassurance. So he experienced the truth of Christ's words, he found out that God keeps His promises. And therefore he himself was confirmed in his faith, greatly strengthened. And his family and servants, to whom he brought the glorious news of the manner of the cure, rejoiced and believed with him. Thus the nobleman's faith progressed from weakness to strength, from trusting in external, visible evidence to believing in the Word only, as is the manner of faith the world over. "Thus the Lord God deals also with us, in order to make us more perfect and place us into a higher station. If we pass through such experiences, then we gain knowledge and become sure of our faith." 29) This miracle Jesus performed as the second in Galilee after He had come from Judea. The time of the full ministry of miracles in Galilee was still in the future.

Summary. *Jesus has a long conversation with the woman of Samaria, through which He works faith in her heart and willingness to do missionary work for Him; He then passes on into Galilee and heals the son of the nobleman of Capernaum.*

29) Luther, 11, 1769.

CHAPTER 5.

The Sick Man of Bethesda. John 5, 1—16.

The health-giving waters: V. 1. **After this there was a feast of the Jews; and Jesus went up to Jerusalem.** V. 2. **Now there is at Jerusalem by the sheep-market a pool, which is called in the Hebrew tongue Bethesda, having five porches.** V. 3. **In these lay a great multitude of impotent folk, of blind, halt, withered, waiting for the moving of the water.** V. 4. **For an angel went down at a certain season into the pool, and troubled the water; whosoever then first, after the troubling of the water, stepped in was made whole of whatsoever disease he had.** "After this"; how long is not stated by the evangelist; he merely denotes an interval, in which a part of the Galilean ministry of Jesus took place. The feast of the Jews to which Jesus journeyed up from Galilee was probably the Feast of Purim, which was celebrated on the 14th and 15th of Adar (March). Cp. Esther 9, 21. Now there was in the city of Jerusalem a gate which was known as the Sheep Gate, probably from the fact that the sacrificial animals were driven into the city through this gate. In this neighborhood was located, even as late as the end of the first century, a pool which bore the Hebrew name Bethesda, House of Grace, or Mercy. The Jews had built five colonnades, or porticoes, around this pool of water, to shelter the sick people from wind and rain. These constituted the hospital of the city, where a large number of sick people, of blind, of lame, of withered, was lying. All of them anxiously awaited the movement, the bubbling of the water in the pool, those that could see having their eyes anxiously fixed upon the surface of the water, and the blind waiting for the sound that told of the movement, or depending upon relatives or friends to lead them to the pool quickly. The phenomenon, which is now generally ascribed to the action of a siphon-like spring, is explained by the evangelist as having been due to the fact that an angel at a certain time came down to the pool and disturbed the water. And the first sick person that entered the water after the phenomenon had taken place became well, no matter what sickness he was bothered with. Many commentators are rather skeptical at this point, refusing to accept the words as the truth, and many critics have simply ruled out this verse. But we hold, according to Scriptures, that the beneficial effects of many so-called natural agencies are due to the work of God's angels. The decrees of God's providence are carried out by these servants of His. It is altogether probable that even to-day the angels of God are active in the waters of many health springs. "Those who feel little or none of the work of God in their own hearts are not willing to allow that He works in others. . . . This is to make any man's experience the rule by which the whole Word of God is to be interpreted, and consequently to leave no more divinity in the Bible than is found in the heart of him who professes to explain it." 30)

The healing: V. 5. **And a certain man was there which had an infirmity thirty and eight years.** V. 6. **When Jesus saw him lie, and knew that he had been now a long time in that case, He saith unto him, Wilt**

30) Clarke, *Commentary*, 5, 548.

thou be made whole? V. 7. **The impotent man answered Him, Sir, I have no man, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pool; but while I am coming, another steppeth down before me.** V. 8. **Jesus saith unto him, Rise, take up thy bed, and walk.** V. 9. **And immediately the man was made whole, and took up his bed, and walked. And on the same day was the Sabbath.** Among all the sick people that were lying in the porticoes at the pool's brink there was no case more pitiful than that of a man who had spent thirty-eight years there in the misery of his sickness, thirty-eight years of alternating hope and despair, of eager longing and painful disappointment. Note: Many a person that is inclined to become impatient at a cross lasting but a few weeks or months might well consider this case and learn patience from the example of the man of Bethesda. Jesus, in accordance with His desire to help all men in whatever trouble they might be, visited also this hospital. He saw the man lying there in his misery; He knew that the poor fellow had spent a long time in that place. It was not merely that Jesus drew conclusions, or that He learned from the man himself or from his friends of his long sickness; His knowledge was that of omniscience. With a view to awaken the man to the nearness of divine power, the Lord addressed him with the question whether he wanted to become well. Through this question the Lord aroused and incited the desire and the longing of the man for the long-lost gift of health. The desire for help and salvation is awakened by the Savior Himself through His Word. The sick man gave a sad answer. He addressed Jesus as the Lord, indicating the beginning of faith in his heart; but he complained in a hopeless tone that he had neither relative nor friend, not a person in the wide world to help him into the water at the appointed time; and when at last he had dragged his helpless limbs over to the pool, some other person had preceded him, and therefore all his efforts were futile. For at each bubbling up of the water apparently only one could be healed. Note: The mere statement of trouble and misfortune is in itself a prayer and well acceptable to the Lord. And Jesus heard the prayer of faith. He gave the sick man the command to arise, a command to be obeyed on the moment by faith in Him who gave it. And not only that, but he should also take up his couch, or pallet, and walk, having been restored to full health and strength. This was a miracle in the true sense of the word, a deed against the course of nature. A sickness of thirty-eight years' standing was completely routed and replaced by the full vigor of complete health, with a perfect use of all organs and members. The man followed the words of Jesus to the letter; for faith accepts, and clings to, the help of Christ. He went away, carrying his pallet, though the day, not without design on the part of Jesus, was the Sabbath.

The objections of the Jews: V. 10. **The Jews therefore said unto him that was cured, It is the Sabbath-day; it is not lawful for thee to carry thy bed.** V. 11. **He answered them, He that made me whole, the same said unto me, Take up thy bed and walk.** V. 12. **Then asked they him, What man is that which said unto thee, Take up thy bed and walk?** V. 13. **And he that was healed wist not who it was; for Jesus had conveyed Himself away, a multitude being in that place.** V. 14. **Afterward Jesus findeth him in the Temple, and said unto him, Behold, thou art made whole; sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee.** V. 15. **The man departed, and told the Jews that it was Jesus which had made him whole.** V. 16. **And therefore did the Jews persecute Jesus, and sought to slay Him, because He had done these things on the Sabbath-day.** The religion of the Jews at the time of Jesus had largely become a matter of dead form, without the true understanding of love and mercy. It was true, indeed, that the law prohibited the carrying of burdens on the Sabbath, Ex. 20, 8; Jer. 17, 21; Neh. 13, 15; Ex. 23, 12. But necessary works were not forbidden, such works as served the immediate needs of the person; for the Sabbath had been established for the sake of man. And in this case the Lord of the Sabbath had spoken. But the Jews took no possible extenuating circumstance into account; they reminded the man of the day and of its demands. The former sick man refused to assume the responsibility and blame for his action. He told the Jews that the man who had made him well had ordered him to take up his bed and walk. His implied argument was: He that could perform such a great miracle, that could heal me with a mere word, must have an authority for His command which transcends that of the ceremonial law. He that gives life is the proper authority for its use. But the Jews were not satisfied with that answer; they wanted to know the name of Him that had given this order. This the former invalid was unable to supply, and a searching look around the vicinity failed to discover Jesus, who had withdrawn or turned aside, an easy matter in such a large crowd. Jesus was not seeking external evidences of mouth adulation: a mere admiration on account of His miracles was an abomination to Him. Note: The purpose of the Jews in asking the invalid the question was not to seek the Lord in faith, but to accuse and condemn Him. Even so many people in our days that must acknowledge the miracles of Christianity study the Bible, not for the sake of knowing the great works of God, but for the sake of finding fault and discovering so-called contradictions. But Jesus did not lose sight of the former sick man. He deliberately arranged it so that He came upon the man in the Temple; for his body had been healed, but the soul still needed attention. Therefore the Lord told him:

Behold, well thou hast become; sin no more, lest worse things come upon thee. The sin of man is the reason and cause for all manner of physical evils and ills, though individual sicknesses may not be due to specific sins, as in this case. The man's long illness had not been brought about by some special sin. But this the Lord means to emphasize: Sickness and all physical evils would never have come into the world if sin had not come first. To realize the horror and heinousness of sin in general is a very important step in the work of justification and sanctification. He that has realized the abomination of sin in itself, and has then accepted Jesus as his Savior, will shun sin with all the might of his regenerated heart. Such a person will not make his members servants of sin, also for that reason that the greater punishment awaits such as do not heed the warning of the Savior, namely, the punishment of hell-fire. Note: Jesus has a personal interest in every sinner and will continue to work for the salvation and sanctification of every one with unabated, loving energy. The man now went away and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had performed the miracle of healing him. He did this, probably not with any evil intent, but in the joy of his knowledge as to the identity of his Benefactor. But the result was that the hypocritical Jews persecuted Jesus; they followed Him about at all times with hostile intention; they considered ways and means to put Him out of the way entirely. The fact that He had performed this healing on the Sabbath was in their eyes a deed that merited death. Note: That is characteristic of the Sabbath-fanatics, to make mountains out of mole-hills, as far as the outward observance of the day is concerned, while, at the same time, they have not the faintest idea of the true meaning of worship in spirit and in truth.

The Relation between the Father and the Son. John 5, 17—30.

Jesus gives the Jews an answer: V. 17. **But Jesus answered them, My Father worketh hitherto, and I work.** V. 18. **Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill Him, because He not only had broken the Sabbath, but said also that God was His Father, making Himself equal with God.** V. 19. **Then answered Jesus and said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, The Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He seeth the Father do; for what things soever He doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise.** V. 20. **For the Father loveth the Son, and showeth Him all things that Himself doeth; and He will show Him greater works than these, that ye may marvel.** The hostile attitude of the Jews and their murderous thoughts were not unknown to Jesus, and He takes occasion to justify Himself, and incidentally to try to convince them of His authority and power. He tells them that His Father is at work, performing the work which He knows is neccesary; God never stops working. And even so He, Christ Himself, is working. Jesus here plainly affirms that He is the Son of God, He places Himself on the same level with God. The Son is just as great, just as divine as the Father. And the entire work of the Father is, at the same time, and in the same way, the work of the Son. In this work there is no Sabbath rest. Without ceasing, without rest, the Son preserves and rules the world. Even in the state of humiliation, He is tending to this work. The miracle of healing the sick man was an exhibition of this creative power, it was evidence of the fact that He, with the Father, has the entire world and all its laws in His power and can do and create whatever He desires. "How long would the sun, the moon, and the entire heaven have its course, which had its progress so definitely so many thousand years, also, that the sun at a certain time and in certain places annually rises and sets, if God who created them, would not daily preserve them? . . . God the Father, through His Word, has begun and perfected the creation of all beings, and preserves them to this day through the same, and continues so long in the work which He creates until He no longer wants it to be. Therefore Christ says, John 5, 17: My Father worketh hitherto, and I work. For just as we, without our assistance and ability, are created by Him, even so we by ourselves cannot be preserved. Therefore, just as heaven, earth, sun, moon, stars, human beings, and everything that lives was created in the beginning through the Word, even so they all are ruled and preserved through it in a miraculous manner." [31] The Jews caught the import of Christ's statement at once: If He was the Son of God, He certainly must be equal to God. Here, in the opinion of the Jews, were two crimes that merited death: breaking the Sabbath and blasphemy. They refused to accept His testimony, though this had been substantiated by the miracle; they hated Him for this plain statement; they were all the more determined to kill Him. Note: The enemies of Christ at all times argue in the same way. The testimony concerning Jesus, the Son of God, the Savior of the world, strikes their conscience and makes them furious. They cannot gainsay the truth, and that is unbearable to them. Their own conscience condemns them. And to drown out these unpleasant influences, they become all the more rabid in their persecution of the Gospel, both in word and deed.

But Jesus, upon this occasion, continued His statement, His testimony concerning Himself. Solemnly He declares to the Jews that the Son can do nothing of Himself, except what He sees the Father doing. That is the result of the relation between Father and Son. The essence of

31) Luther, 7, 1562.

the Son is out of the Father; His is not an independent essence. The persons of the Godhead are not separate from each other, each doing His own individual work. In that which He does and performs, the Son is joined with the Father. And again: Whatever the Father does, the Son does likewise, at the same time, in the same manner. There is not only perfect sympathy, there is complete oneness between the two. And this relation is made still closer by the fact that the Father loves the Son and shows Him all that He Himself does. The power of either is absolute, and yet their work and will is one. This creative power finds its expression in the work of Jesus on earth. The Father, through the Son, will do greater works than those which have been done up to the present time, to the great surprise and wonder of the Jews. The mere healing of a sick man would seem insignificant in comparison with the miracles which are yet to be revealed.

The greater miracles: V. 21. **For as the Father raiseth up the dead and quickeneth them, even so the Son quickeneth whom He will.** V. 22. **For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son,** v. 23. **that all men should honor the Son, even as they honor the Father. He that honoreth not the Son honoreth not the Father which hath sent Him.** V. 24. **Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth My Word, and believeth on Him that sent Me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life.** V. 25. **Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and they that hear shall live.** V. 26. **For as the Father hath life in Himself, so hath He given to the Son to have life in Himself;** v. 27. **and hath given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of Man.** Since the miracle and the words of Jesus had not yet convinced the Jews, He here points forward to two miracles which would put His claim to the Sonship of God beyond question. The Jews believed in the power of God to give life and to raise the dead, Deut. 32, 39; 1 Sam. 2, 6; Is. 26, 19. This work of the Father, to raise the dead and restore them to life, is the work of His independent will. And the same is true of the Son. He has absolute power over life and death; as the Author of life He has power to give life and being at will. His will is just as omnipotent as that of the Father. And the same holds true of another divine work. Since all sins are, in the last analysis, directed against God, it is He that judges and condemns; that is His function, His special work. But now He is not exercising the works of this power, but has given this authority, together with its execution, into the hands of the Son. He has thus openly affirmed the full equality, the unquestioned deity of the Son. The allotting of men to their eternal destinies is altogether in the hands of the Son. The statement is sweeping, it refers to all men, and without appeal. Truly, if such an unquestioned divine prerogative is given to the Son, then there can be no doubt as to His deity and as to the divine honor which is due Him. There is no difference between the honor given to the Father and that due to the Son. In honoring the Son, men honor the Father; in refusing to honor the Son, they incidentally take away the honor from the Father. For divine honor and glory belong to the Son.

With great solemnity and a double asseveration the Lord tries to drive home this truth. It is His purpose to give eternal life. That is the purpose and will of God with regard to all men in the world. And the conditions for the receiving of this gift are very simple. They are merely that a person hear His Word, the glorious, sweet message of the Gospel, and then believe in the Father, that sent Him into the world. It is not a question of obtaining eternal life at some later date, but of possessing it right now. The same thought is also expressed from the negative side, namely, that such a person does not come under condemnation. Cp. Rom. 8, 1. 34. By accepting the Word of the Gospel, the believer goes from spiritual death, which would have resulted in eternal death, into life, into the full possession of the life which Jesus brought out of the grave. He has entered into the blessed, intimate communion with God, into the fulness of the glorious life which this union implies. This thought the Lord brings out with equally solemn emphasis. The time which the Triune God had selected had come with the incarnation of Jesus; the great hour of Jesus for calling the spiritually dead back into life had struck. Many a member of the Jewish nation, many a person that was a true Israelite, even if not a descendant of Abraham, was hearing and obeying the voice of the Son of God, as He was proclaiming it with His own mouth. And by such hearing, by the accepting of the Gospel, all such persons were getting the gift of life as their safe possession. The Father has life in Himself; in the same manner, in the same degree, the Son has life in Himself. Christ, even according to His human nature, has received life as His absolute possession. The Son can give life, for He Himself is the Possessor of life, He is Life and the Fountainhead of life. That is one of the mysteries of the Trinity. And the final proof for the Son's divine power and majesty is His authority to exercise and execute judgment. This authority is His in His capacity as Jesus Christ the man, as the God-man, as the Word of God Incarnate. Those who will not accept the life which He proclaims and offers in the Gospel, will come under the judgment of condemnation by their own fault. Jesus Christ, the Judge, will be obliged to pronounce the judgment of condemnation upon them. And all of this proves beyond all question that Jesus is true God, with unabridged and full divine powers.

The coming of the Judgment: V. 28. **Marvel not at this; for the hour is coming in the which all that are in the graves shall hear His voice, v. 29. and shall come forth: they that have done good unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation. V. 30. I can of Mine own self do nothing; as I hear I judge, and My judgment is just, because I seek not Mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent Me.** The fact that it is Jesus Christ, the God-man Jesus, to whose human nature such great powers are given and who, in this capacity, will judge all men on the last day, should not occasion surprise and wonder, neither on the part of the Jews nor on the part of any other men. The hour appointed in God's counsel is surely coming, when all that are in their graves will hear and obey the voice of the Son of Man. For it is an almighty voice, it has the power to call men back from physical death into life. All men will hear that voice in that hour. Though their flesh be decayed and eaten by worms, though their bones be fallen into dust, ground to ashes, and scattered to the four winds, yet their bodies, at the omnipotent command of Christ, will rise from their resting-place. They must come forth to stand before Him. And the result of His judicial investigation will be either the one or the other. They in whom the righteousness of faith ripened into righteousness of life, that proved their faith in good works, will come forth out of their graves unto the resurrection of life. They will receive, as a reward of grace, the full, eternal enjoyment of life, in an everlasting resurrection. But the others, that have given evidence of their total lack of faith by evil deeds, by acts not in conformity with the will of God, will come forth from their graves, but only in a resurrection unto damnation, from temporal death to eternal death, a damnation which is essentially a casting away from the face of God, and which will continue throughout eternity,—what a horrible prospect for the unbelievers! That is the last great work of the Son of God, to judge the whole world on the last day. And the judgment is bound to be just, not only because Jesus is the Son of Man, with true flesh and blood, who surely will not condemn any of His brethren according to the flesh unjustly, but also because His judgment is not absolute, according to His ideas and prejudices. He speaks what He hears from the Father; His own personal, human opinion in no way comes into consideration, since He seeks to carry out only the will of the Father. While His will is perfect, divine, independent, it is still identical with that of the Father. It is for this reason that His judgment will be right beyond question. We have here another glimpse into the essence of the Triune God, into the relation between Father and Son. The Son is coordinate with the Father in all matters.

The Witness of John, of the Father, and of Scriptures. John 5, 31—47.

A reference to John: V. 31. **If I bear witness of Myself, My witness is not true. V. 32. There is another that beareth witness of Me; and I know that the witness which He witnesseth of Me is true. V. 33. Ye sent unto John, and he bare witness unto the truth. V. 34. But I receive not testimony from man; but these things I say that ye might be saved. V. 35. He was a burning and a shining light, and ye were willing for a season to rejoice in his light.** The Jews might have raised the objection at this point that Jesus was speaking and testifying of Himself, but that His own testimony had no value. Cp. Deut. 19, 15. Jesus concedes in advance that from their standpoint He stands alone, and that therefore His words will not stand without corroboration from other witnesses. He was trying to place Himself entirely on their level, in order that the points which He wanted to make would be all the stronger. At the same time it remains true that all His words are eternal truth and need no confirmation. But for the sake of the blind, hostile Jews He is perfectly willing to argue from their standpoint. And He refers to another Witness, one that is unimpeachable, whose testimony He is about to refer to and of which He knows and they must admit that there can be no question as to its certainty. Note: It is not the least of the evils attending unbelief that it acts not only in opposition to God, but acts also inconsistently with itself. In many cases it professes to receive Scriptures in bulk, even conceding them to have come through divine inspiration; and yet believes no part separately. Before going into detail concerning the testimony of the Father, Jesus refers them to a witness whom many of the Jews there present had seen and heard. They had sent a delegation to John, chap. 3, 25—36, to get definite information about the new Teacher, and John had repeated his former testimony concerning the divinity of Christ and carried it out at length. He had borne witness to the truth. He had stated the facts in his testimony concerning Jesus. Now Jesus was not in need of testimony from any man, but John's testimony concerning Him redounded to their salvation. If they had accepted that, it would have been to their own temporal and eternal advantage. They would have been saved by relying upon that message. They have a full chance at salvation now, if they will but heed His reference to that Gospel-message. Jesus sought no honor for Himself, His object was the salvation of men. John himself, during his lifetime, was a burning and a shining light. His testimony concerning Christ was plain, clear, unmistakable. If they had heeded it, they would have been shown the way to salvation. Note: Every minister of the Gospel should be a light, to shed

forth not his own luster, but that of the Redeemer; not consuming, either others by a zeal without knowledge or himself by a foolish manner of working, but burning in holy love for the Savior and His Gospel; and shining, finding his greatest joy in leading the way to Jesus. The Jews of that time were willing enough for a season to rejoice greatly in the light of John. It was like the brief play of the moths about the arc lamp, a regular revival-type of religion, with much emotional reveling, but no sound basis of faith. Just so many people in our days may be struck for a while by some aspect of religious work and become most enthusiastic. But when the enthusiasm has burned out, the work palls on them, to their own damnation.

The witness of the Father: V. 36. **But I have greater witness than that of John; for the works which the Father hath given Me to finish, the same works that I do bear witness of Me that the Father hath sent Me.** V. 37. **And the Father Himself which hath sent Me hath borne witness of Me. Ye have neither heard His voice at any time nor seen His shape.** V. 38. **And ye have not His Word abiding in you; for whom He hath sent, Him ye believe not.** The testimony of John was valuable for their sakes only; Jesus did not need the witness of men. He could appeal to testimony greater than John's. For all the works which He was performing had been given Him by the Father to carry out in just that way; all the miracles of Jesus served a definite purpose. Through them God Himself bore witness to Him that He was the Son of God. If He had been a deceiver and cheat, God would not have given Him the power to perform such wonderful deeds. No one that saw His miracles and judged them with an unbiased, open mind, could deny His divine mission. All His works were evidence of greater weight than John's. The entire appearance of Jesus and the manifestation of His glory called out loudly in testimony of His divine mission. And in addition to this testimony, undeniable, unassailable, there was the witness of the Father's voice, through the writings of the prophets. God did not appear to the Jews in a visible manifestation; they did not hear His voice, they did not see His form. And yet, there was the evidence contained in the Word of the Old Testament, so clear and unmistakable that there could be no doubt as to its correctness. In spite of all that, however, His Word had found no abiding place in their hearts; they did not accept the testimony of God Himself. For the reception accorded to the delegate of God, to the Son of God Himself, is a proof of the fact that the Word of God does not abide in them. If they actually believed God in the witnesses of the Old Testament, as they professed to, they would receive His great Minister, the Prophet to whom Moses pointed. It is the essence of unbelief that people refuse the Word of God an abiding place in their heart, that they simulate religion in their lives, but have no true religion in their hearts.

The authority of the Scriptures: V. 39. **Search the Scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life; and they are they which testify of Me.** V. 40. **And ye will not come to Me that ye might have life.** V. 41. **I receive not honor from men.** V. 42. **But I know you that ye have not the love of God in you.** V. 43. **I am come in My Father's name, and ye receive Me not; if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive.** V. 44. **How can ye believe, which receive honor one of another, and seek not the honor that cometh from God only?** V. 45. **Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father; there is one that accuseth you, even Moses, in whom ye trust.** V. 46. **For had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed Me; for he wrote of Me.** V. 47. **But if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe My words?** A most diligent perusal, a ceaseless searching of Scriptures is recommended by Jesus. The Scriptures, as the Jews had them in those days, as they were used by them in synagog and Temple, contained the historical books of the Old Testament, the books of the prophets, and the Psalms. This book was complete in the days of Jesus, it bore that collective title; the Jews knew exactly to what Jesus was referring. And to the Scriptures Jesus appeals as to an authority. He thereby acknowledges and confesses the inspiration and the inerrancy of the Old Testament. And this fact was accepted without question also by the Jewish teachers. For that reason their belief that they could find in it eternal life, that they had in it the revelation of the way to heaven, was well founded. But one thing they no longer knew, or else ignored most shamefully, namely this, that the Scriptures contain eternal life only because they testify of Jesus the Savior. Jesus Christ is the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end of the Old Testament revelation. The Jews should therefore have gotten a correct picture of the Messiah, and they should have applied the Old Testament prophecy to this great Teacher. But their evil will refused to come to Jesus; they rejected the life which He was offering to them. They deliberately spurned His offer of grace and mercy and chose rather the way of damnation than to accept the Holy One of God. And, incidentally, they had no reason for their rejection, so far as the behavior of Jesus was concerned. For He did not seek honor from men. His methods did not savor of the schemes of the modern evangelists that seek honor and get notoriety. Christ wanted no glory from men, would not receive it from them. So they cannot make that a reason for rejecting Him. Jesus has a full understanding of them and of their case, and His words are a merciless exposure of the thoughts of their mind. There was no real love of God in their hearts. They

dissembled, they proved their hypocrisy at every turn. For if such love were truly in their hearts, they would have felt obliged to accept Christ, the Minister of God in a most peculiar sense. He did not come in His own name, seeking His own aggrandizement, any benefit from men; His motives were altogether unselfish. But such is the perversity of their hearts that they refused Him a decent hearing and were far from accepting Him, whereas they would be easily taken in by a deceiver who would come in his own name. This was shown in a number of instances in the history of the Jews. Again and again false Messiahs arose, among whom Bar Cochba and Shabbatai Sebi are notable, who found no difficulty in getting many adherents. The Jews were altogether insane in their eagerness to follow these deceivers. But Jesus, who came in His Father's name, was rejected. That fact characterized the Jews of the time of Jesus, and also since: they sought their own honor, they were very much concerned about honor before men, and wanted flattery and received homage from one another. This spirit is diametrically opposed to the spirit of the Christ, who scorned all such flimsy subterfuge. Far better to seek the honor which God alone can give, and which comes only to the meek and lowly in heart! That is the real reason for unbelief, that men seek their own advantage and care nothing about God and about His opinion concerning their sinfulness and their need of regeneration. Therefore the final judgment of unbelief will be all the more severe.

Under these circumstances, it will not be necessary for Jesus to bring any accusation against the Jews at the court of God, for their own Moses, their lawgiver, of whom they boast, will condemn them in his own writings. They hoped to be saved by the works of the Law, not knowing that Moses himself in no way taught that they could be saved by such deeds, but that he pointed forward, in type and prophecy, to the Messiah and His salvation. Really to believe the message of Moses is to believe in Jesus the Savior. For Moses had prophesied of Jesus and had urged his people that they give Him honor and obedience. It would be Moses, therefore, that would condemn them. The writings of Moses they would not believe; how, then, would they believe the sayings of Christ? Things that had been written and codified and taught for centuries they refused to believe, although they pointed directly forward to only one Man. There was therefore little hope of their believing the words of this one Man, though all the circumstances of prophecy and fulfilment could be shown to agree. The same facts hold true to-day. Many people refuse to believe Scriptural sermons because they refuse to believe that the Bible is the inspired Word of God.

Summary. *Jesus heals the sick man of Bethesda, answers the objection of the Jews to this Sabbath healing, shows the relation between Him and His Father, and proves that He has the witness both of the works and of the Word of the Father for His divine mission.*

CHAPTER 6.

The Feeding of the Five Thousand.

John 6, 1—14.

Jesus back in Galilee: V. 1. **After these things Jesus went over the Sea of Galilee, which is the Sea of Tiberias.** V. 2. **And a great multitude followed Him, because they saw His miracles which He did on them that were diseased.** V. 3. **And Jesus went up into a mountain, and there He sat with His disciples.** V. 4. **And the Passover, a feast of the Jews, was nigh.** Cp. Matt. 14, 15—21; Mark 6, 35—44; Luke 9, 10—17. After these things, without definite fixing of the time. The chances are that the journey to the Feast of Purim had taken only a few days, and that the Galilean ministry of Jesus was not influenced by the interruption. Jesus went from Capernaum or its vicinity across the Sea of Galilee or Tiberias to the northeastern shore, not far from the city of Bethsaida Julias. The intention of the Lord had been to have a few days of rest, but this purpose was not realized. For a great multitude, numbering thousands of people, went around the northern end of the lake, full of eager desire to witness the miracles which He was performing in the case of various sick and invalid persons. There is no word concerning any eagerness for the Word of salvation, but only of this curiosity, not unmixed with morbidness, which sought excitement and variety. With the multitude at His heels, Jesus ascended one of the hills in the neighborhood, and there sat down with His disciples. Though the people, on the whole, were not eager for the Word of Life, Jesus lost no chance to speak to them of the one thing needful. He also healed their sick. The evangelist notes that this incident happened shortly before the Passover of the Jews, which occurred a month after the Feast of Purim. It was, therefore, early in the spring.

Jesus tests the faith of the disciples: V. 5. **When Jesus then lifted up His eyes, and saw a great company come unto Him, He saith unto Philip, Whence shall we buy bread that these may eat?** V. 6. **And this He said to prove him; for He Himself knew what He would do.** V. 7. **Philip answered Him, Two hundred pennyworth of bread is not sufficient for them that every one of them may take a little.** V. 8. **One**

of His disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, saith unto Him, v. 9. There is a lad here which hath five barley loaves and two small fishes; but what are they among so many? Jesus was busy all day, teaching and healing the sick, and hardly had time to look around. In the mean time, however, the crowd increased in number continually; the people kept coming all day long. When Jesus, then, upon the urgent request of the disciples, halted in His work of mercy and raised His eyes, He saw the assembled multitudes all around Him in the plain at the foot of the hill. The emphatic suggestion of the disciples as to the dismissal of the people at once caused a plan to form in the mind of the Lord, whose principal part concerned the disciples themselves. He proposed both to feed the multitude and to test the faith of His followers. Addressing Himself to Philip, whose acquaintance with the country hereabout might be assumed to be reasonably good, Jesus asked where there was a place at which they might buy food. His speech presupposes it as a self-evident fact that the people should be treated as the guests of the apostles and Himself. He had fully decided what He would do, but He was anxious to try out the faith of Philip, as well as that of the rest. Philip, having ascertained the amount of money at hand, answered according to His understanding that two hundred denarii (almost thirty-four dollars) would hardly buy a sufficient quantity of bread to give to each one at least a little. Philip's anxiety had caused him to make a careful calculation. He had forgotten the first miracle at Cana as well as the many that had happened since. He figured in exactly the same way as the average person, even if he be a confessed Christian, who tends to forget that God has His own ways to figure in emergencies, if His Christians will but trust in Him. Andrew was no better than Philip, so far as his trust in the Lord was concerned. He had scouted around and found that there was a small boy present who had five barley loaves and two small fishes for his provisions, but he immediately added, in doleful helplessness, that there was no hope that this would reach with so many people present. The weakness of both disciples is repeated in numerous instances in our days. Christians are often worried with anxious care for the needs of the body. Then they sit and calculate and go through all possible cupboards and storing-places to find out whether they will have enough to sustain their lives. They forget the almighty power of their Lord.

The miracle: **V. 10. And Jesus said, Make the men sit down. Now there was much grass in the place. So the men sat down, in number about five thousand. V. 11. And Jesus took the loaves; and when He had given thanks, He distributed to the disciples, and the disciples to them that were set down; and likewise of the fishes as much as they would. V. 12. When they were filled, He said unto His disciples, Gather up the fragments that remain that nothing be lost. V. 13. Therefore they gathered them together, and filled twelve baskets with the fragments of the five barley loaves which remained over and above unto them that had eaten. V. 14. Then those men, when they had seen the miracle that Jesus did, said, This is of a truth that prophet that should come into the world.** Jesus now assumed charge of affairs, He became master of ceremonies, governor of the feast. He ordered the disciples to have the people recline on the green grass, which grew in abundance at this place, in the lowlands near the mouth of the Jordan, and had attained its full growth at this time of year. Since the men reclined in groups, it was an easy matter to find their number, which was five thousand, without women and children. Before the entire vast assembly which was now seated in anxious expectation, Jesus next took the loaves and gave thanks; He dedicated them to God by His prayer. And He at the same time proved Himself the almighty God and Lord, for His blessing upon the bread caused the miracle. The few loaves did not grow into great stacks, but they multiplied under His almighty touch during the distribution. No matter how often the disciples returned to the Lord for further supplies, there was always enough on hand. They obtained not only of the bread all that they wished for, but they were also given of the fishes, as much as every one desired. All the people were fully satisfied, they had all that they could eat. Here was a powerful proof of the almighty power of Christ. The simple Nazarene is the Creator and Preserver of all things, who gives food and sustenance to all creatures. The hand of the Lord is not shortened even now, but is able and willing to help in all emergencies, if we but place our trust in Him. It is our duty to use the means He has given us, to do the work of our calling faithfully; then His blessing will never fail us. Incidentally, Jesus taught proper food conservation. He commanded that the disciples should pick up the small pieces that remained, the fragments, that nothing might go to waste. And when they did so, they filled twelve large wicker baskets or hampers, such as are used in the Orient and elsewhere by gardeners for carrying fruit and vegetables on the back. The evangelist emphasizes that these fragments remained over and above that which had been eaten by the multitude. There is a lesson for all times in this story, namely, that infinite resources do not justify waste. There is a far cry from being anxiously careful for the future and being careful of the gifts which God has given. But the people did not draw the right conclusion from the miracle. They merely thought that this was "the beginning of that reign of earthly abundance which the prophets

were thought to have foretold." Some of them may have believed that Jesus was truly the Messiah, but the majority voiced their opinion in the statement that this man was of a truth, beyond doubt, that prophet that should come into the world, for they understood the words of Moses, Deut. 18, 15, of a mere man, with the spirit and the power of Moses. Note: There are many people in the midst of Christendom whose ideas concerning Christ are just as hazy as were those of the Jews on this occasion. It is only by continual study of the Bible that a full and clear understanding of the person and office of Jesus may be gained.

Christ Walks on the Sea. John 6, 15—21.

V. 15. **When Jesus therefore perceived that they would come and take Him by force to make Him a king, He departed again into a mountain, Himself alone.** V. 16. **And when even was now come, His disciples went down unto the sea,** v. 17. **and entered into a ship, and went over the sea toward Capernaum. And it was now dark, and Jesus was not come to them.** V. 18. **And the sea arose by reason of a great wind that blew.** V. 19. **So when they had rowed about five and twenty or thirty furlongs, they see Jesus walking on the sea, and drawing nigh unto the ship; and they were afraid.** V. 20. **But He saith unto them, It is I; be not afraid.** V. 21. **Then they willingly received Him into the ship; and immediately the ship was at the land whither they went.** Here was evidence that the Jews had no idea as to the real meaning of the Messiah and His work, even if some of them were inclined to accept Jesus as the Christ. The intention gained adherents in their midst to snatch Jesus away suddenly and carry Him off for the purpose of making Him king. But Jesus is not a mere Helper in physical needs; His aim is not to cater to the temporal, carnal desires of men; He is no "bread-king." He knew the hearts and minds of the people; by His omniscience He was fully aware of the ideas and intentions of the people. And therefore Jesus fled from them, since the idea of an earthly kingdom was not included in His plan of salvation. This was a crisis, and He determined to lay the matter before His heavenly Father in prayer, as every one of His followers should do at all times. He went up into a mountain all alone. But first of all He insisted that His disciples should embark and return to the other side of the sea. By this time it was getting dark, and the disciples, having launched forth, set their course toward Capernaum, while Jesus stayed there alone. The voyage proved extremely unpleasant. A deep darkness fell upon them, and a heavy wind arose, causing the waves of the sea to roll in threatening billows. And still Jesus had not joined them, the evangelist remarks. They missed His presence sorely; there was a sense of impending disaster upon them. But handicapped as they were, the disciples nevertheless continued their efforts, rowing in the face of the storm, since it was out of the question to use the sails. It was long past midnight, and they had covered only about three miles (a *stadion* being about 202 yards), when they saw Jesus walking on the sea and coming near to the boat. Since the belief in ghosts was almost universal, the poor disciples could not explain this phenomenon and were filled with fear. But Jesus reassured them with the calm statement: It is I, do not fear. Where Jesus is, there is no need of fear; He has effectually and eternally banished all fear. His voice and His presence filled their hearts with calmness and courage. Now they were eager and willing to take Him into the boat; and no sooner had they done so than they were at the land whither they were bound. The omnipresent power of Jesus annihilates distances. He here performed another miracle, for He has absolute power over all creatures, over the roaring sea as well as over time and distance. The insignificant man Jesus is the Lord of all creation; He may, at will, abrogate any law of nature. From the distant mountain peak to the midst of the sea and then to the western shore of the lake in but a few moments of time: that is the evidence of His omnipresent power. This fact redounds to the comfort of the believers at all times, Matt. 28, 20. All Christians should know that their entire life with all its vicissitudes, their work, their eating and drinking, their entire mode of living is in the hands of Jesus. The care of Jesus will provide for them, will defend them against all dangers, and guard and protect them from all evil.

Christ the Bread of Life. John 6, 22—59.

The surprise of the people: V. 22. **The day following, when the people which stood on the other side of the sea saw that there was none other boat there, save that one whereinto His disciples were entered, and that Jesus went not with His disciples into the boat, but that His disciples were gone away alone;** v. 23. **(howbeit there came other boats from Tiberias nigh unto the place where they did eat bread after that the Lord had given thanks;)** v. 24. **when the people therefore saw that Jesus was not there, neither His disciples, they also took shipping, and came to Capernaum, seeking for Jesus.** V. 25. **And when they had found Him on the other side of the sea, they said unto Him, Rabbi, when camest Thou hither?** On the morning after the miracle of the loaves there was great excitement and astonishment on the northeastern shore of the lake. The people that had remained in that neighborhood over night, expecting to take hold of Jesus in the morning, were deeply perplexed. Only one boat had been

at the place of the miraculous feeding, and that was the one into which the disciples had gone. This boat had not had Jesus as a passenger, and it had not returned. The question therefore was: How had Jesus gotten away? They were at a loss to explain His absence. But meanwhile other boats from Tiberias landed in the neighborhood of the place where the miracle had been performed. So the people took advantage of the opportunity thus offered. They were determined to find Jesus at all costs, and therefore they took some of the boats and crossed the lake to Capernaum. When they had finally located the object of their quest on the other side of the lake, they opened on Him with the question as to His manner of getting there, for the when includes the how. They were always scenting the abnormal, the miraculous, in connection with this man; it was the only thing which made their quest worth while, in their estimation. But the purposes of Jesus do not agree with their curiosity, and therefore He did not give them a direct answer. His telling of the walking on the water would have precipitated a crisis then and there.

The work of God: V. 26. **Jesus answered them and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Ye seek Me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves and were filled.** V. 27. **Labor not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of Man shall give unto you; for Him hath God the Father sealed.** V. 28. **Then said they unto Him, What shall we do that we might work the works of God?** V. 29. **Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent.** Jesus knew the reason for their insistence, for the great interest they were showing at this time. With solemn emphasis He tells them that the reason why they sought Him was a wrong one. They had indeed seen some of His signs with their bodily eyes, but they had not given them the proper attention; they were altogether lacking in the understanding that these signs were evidences, proofs, of His divinity, of the fact that He is the Son of God, the Redeemer and Savior of mankind. Thus the meaning of the great signs before their eyes escaped them entirely. They sought Him because their concern was for their bodies and stomachs. If these were but filled; their souls were not a matter of concern to them. But their efforts were worthy of a higher cause; they should work with equal diligence, not for the perishable food of the body, but for that food which will last into life everlasting. For there is such a food which nourishes the soul and preserves the soul unto eternal life. That food alone was worth acquiring, for its effects would never lose their power. "Ye should not seek Me for the sake of transitory things; for I (this He wishes to say) am a different teacher, who does not preach of perishable food, how sowing, baking, plowing should be done; for all this ye know well even before, and Moses has taught you how ye should work. My teaching has not that aim, neither should ye come to Me for that, but that I give you an eternal food." 32) This spiritual food, which would strengthen unto eternal life, the Son of Man would give them, not because of special merit on their part, but freely, out of divine love and grace. For He had gone forth from the Father, as a proof of which He bore the seal of God. The miracle of the day before and other signs showed that God had commissioned Jesus as the Minister to give the food which nourishes unto everlasting life. They were a proof that the eternal Son of God could give eternal life to such as accepted Him in faith. "And that He says: The Son of Man, therewith He indicates clearly and publicly that God the Father has a Son whom they can see before their eyes, take hold of, hear, and feel; as St. John also says of Him: Which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, and our hands have handled; that same bodily person, born of the Virgin Mary, He will give you an eternal food." 33) Some of the people in the multitude at least were impressed by this statement of Jesus that they should labor, that they should earnestly strive to acquire food with such wonderful power, and they wanted to know what they must do in order to make themselves fit to perform such works as would be acceptable before God, as would be well-pleasing to Him. They were caught in the idea that there must be some merit on their part, that they must perform something for their salvation. But Jesus corrects that notion. There is only one thing which they should do, and that is to believe on Him whom God has sent. Faith is here spoken of as a work of man which he does in order to obtain salvation. That side of faith, trust, full and complete reliance in Jesus and His salvation, that is brought out here: the fact that every believer must accept and hold Jesus and His salvation. That is actually a work of the believer, an act of reason and will. True, this faith must be wrought by God and cannot come into being without God's power; also, faith is not a work which merits redemption, it is not that its moral excellence saves men. But when God has worked faith in the heart of man, when spiritual life has been engendered in the heart of man, then man is active in accepting that wonderful food which nourishes unto life eternal.

Bread from heaven: V. 30. **They said therefore unto Him, What sign showest Thou, then, that we may see, and believe Thee? What dost Thou work?** V. 31. **Our fathers did eat manna in the desert; as it is written, He gave them bread from heaven to eat.** V. 32. **Then Jesus said unto them,**

32) Luther, 7, 2199.
33) Luther, 7, 2203.

Verily, verily, I say unto you, Moses gave you not that bread from heaven; but My Father giveth you the true Bread from heaven. V. 33. **For the Bread of God is He which cometh down from heaven and giveth life unto the world.** V. 34. **Then said they unto Him, Lord, evermore give us this bread.** That Jesus demanded faith in Himself as a condition of their obtaining salvation, this the Jews now understood. They therefore demanded proof of His ambassadorship and of His ministry, which, as He claimed, elevated Him to the divine rank. It is a most peculiar thing that they did not yet understand the relation between the miracles of Jesus and His divine mission, His deity. They challenge Him to produce some extraordinary sign which would convince them beyond question, which would oblige them to believe. They put the matter so as to make Him responsible for their faith or unbelief. They expect a sign from Him something like that of Moses, who produced manna for the Israelites in the wilderness. They refer to a passage from Scriptures, Ps. 78, 24. 25, which speaks of this wonderful feeding with bread from heaven. In a way, the expression "bread from heaven" could stand, since the manna had fallen down from the sky with the dew, but at best this was merely a figurative expression. Jesus therefore declares, with great emphasis: Not Moses gave you bread from heaven, but My Father gives you the true Bread from heaven. Even in the desert it was not Moses that gave the children of Israel the manna, and so, at best, Moses can be spoken of in this connection by courtesy only; he had nothing to do with the miracle. But here matters are different; here is the true Bread from heaven given to all men by the Father. He that comes down from heaven with the purpose of giving life to the world, He is the Bread of God, Jesus the Savior. He is the Bread from heaven in deed and in truth, and by His work of giving salvation He establishes that fact beyond doubt. This saying impressed the Jews very deeply; they had but a faint conception of what the Lord might mean in speaking of this wonderful Bread, something like the woman of Samaria. They begged Jesus that He would always, at all times, give them that bread. Their understanding was still not clear, but they have caught enough of His earnestness and enthusiasm, and desire plain information. Note: A great deal has been gained if we can get the unbelievers to ask questions concerning Jesus and His salvation, perhaps persuade them of the fact that Christianity in itself is worth while, invite them to come to church.

Jesus the Bread of Life: V. 35. **And Jesus said unto them, I am the Bread of Life; he that cometh to Me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on Me shall never thirst.** V. 36. **But I said unto you, That ye also have seen Me, and believe not.** V. 37. **All that the Father giveth Me shall come to Me; and him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out.** V. 38. **For I came down from heaven, not to do Mine own will, but the will of Him that sent Me.** V. 39. **And this is the Father's will which hath sent Me, that of all which He hath given Me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day.** V. 40. **And this is the will of Him that sent Me, that every one which seeth the Son and believeth on Him may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day.** Jesus now makes a plain, frank statement. He had not said that He would give the wonderful bread that came down from heaven, but He had asserted that this miraculous Bread which came down from heaven had the power to give eternal life. He Himself is that Bread of Life. No matter who it is that comes to Him, he will no more suffer with hunger, just as he that drinks of the living water of His salvation will never again be bothered with thirst. To come to Jesus means to believe in Him as the Savior of the world. All the desires and longings of the soul find their complete gratification in Him and His mercy. But although the Son of God and such perfect satisfaction was brought so near to the Jews, yet they did not believe. They have seen Him in His ministry of miracles, and they have heard the words of life which issued from His mouth at such times, but they have refused to believe. They should know, therefore, that everything which the Father gives to the Son will come to Him. To come to Jesus is to believe; faith is a spiritual coming. The heart and the will of a person goes to Christ, is joined to Christ. All those people actually come to Jesus whom the Father has given to Him as His own. Faith is the result of God's merciful selection. It is a call and selection of grace, and therefore none of those that come to Him in faith will the Lord cast out. God's thoughts are thoughts of peace and mercy only; He has no desire for the death of any sinner. To fulfil this merciful, kind purpose of His heavenly Father Jesus has come into the world. It is the will of the Father that Jesus lose none of those whom the Father has given Him. They are all equally precious in His sight, far too dearly bought to be lost. Those, therefore, whom the Father has given to the Son as His own, the Son should raise from the dead on the last day to give them the full enjoyment of the blessings and the glory which are their heritage. For the sake of clearness and emphasis, Jesus repeats the same thought. It is the will of the Father who sent the Son into the world that every one that looks upon the Son in faith, that accepts Him as the Son of God and the Savior of the world, shall, without fail, have eternal life, shall become partaker of the glories of heaven by and in the resurrection. In Christ we have been chosen unto eternal life.

The murmuring Jews: V. 41. **The Jews**

then murmured at Him because He said, I am the Bread which came down from heaven. V. 42. **And they said, Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How is it, then, that He saith, I came down from heaven?** V. 43. **Jesus therefore answered and said unto them, Murmur not among yourselves.** V. 44. **No man can come to Me except the Father which hath sent Me draw him; and I will raise him up at the last day.** V. 45. **It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man, therefore, that hath heard and hath learned of the Father cometh unto Me.** V. 46. **Not that any man hath seen the Father save He which is of God, He hath seen the Father.** At this point the Jews started to grumble, to murmur among themselves, to express their disapproval. The idea that this man should Himself be that wonderful Bread which had come down from heaven seemed preposterous to them. They could not merely not understand how this could be true, but they believed themselves to be in possession of evidence to the contrary. They were sure that they knew His antecedents, they were acquainted with His mother, they knew the name of His father. Note: It has always been an offense to the reason of man that God and man are united in the person of Jesus. But the Lord here advises against all murmuring, against all attempts to make the matter plausible to reason. For no man can come to Christ by His own reason and strength. All brooding and disputing will not work faith in the heart. There must be a drawing on the part of the Father, by whose strength faith is worked in the heart. Without this work on the part of the Father there can be no faith nor any rising to eternal life. That is the origin, the reason of belief in Jesus: the Father draws to the Son; He influences heart and will in such a way that a person accepts Jesus as His Savior and disregards entirely all difficulties which his reason may experience in the understanding of the person of the Savior. God not only gives the power to come to faith and to choose the good, but He works, creates all good in man and makes him willing. Faith is altogether a work of God. "What does 'no man' mean? Do you think it refers only to a cow or ass, or some other animal? Rather 'no man' here refers to the entire human race, the whole world, no man excepted, the most powerful, the most holy, the most prudent, the wisest. It is spoken briefly, but it is a powerful phrase, which thrusts down and throws to the ground all that is called human wisdom, reason, judgment, righteousness, and holiness, also religion and worship. For to come to this article and salvation in Christ no wisdom helps, no prudence, no shedding of blood and giving of alms, nor what the entire human generation is able to do with wisdom, with piety and sanctity. For it says: No man can come to Me, except the Father draw him. This should be taught."[34] This fact Jesus substantiates by a passage from the prophets: They will all be taught by God, Is. 54, 13. Those that are taught of God, that have learned the lesson of their own inability and lack of strength, and therefore both hear the Father and in all things learn of Him, only they can come to faith in Christ. The Father uses no compulsion, but makes use of teaching only. He appeals to the reason and understanding, to the heart and the will of men, teaches and persuades and makes them willing. And this is possible only because God incidentally illumines the heart. In that way the Father works the willingness, in that way man becomes eager to come to Jesus by faith in His atonement. This is not to be understood as though there were any physical contact between God and man; the knowledge of God was not communicated directly, by immediate vision of God. There is only one Man who has received His Being directly from God and who is also in immediate communication with God; He it is that has seen the Father. For that reason it is essential that a Christian believe the Word of Jesus without the slightest doubt, since His deity demands as much.

Living Bread to eat: V. 47. **Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on Me hath everlasting life.** V. 48. **I am that Bread of Life.** V. 49. **Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness and are dead.** V. 50. **This is the Bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof and not die.** V. 51. **I am the living Bread which came down from heaven; if any man eat of this Bread, he shall live forever; and the Bread that I will give is My flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.** Jesus changes neither text nor contents of His sermon in one particle. He repeats the main thoughts again to impress them upon His hearers. It is faith in Him which gives eternal life; that is the only way in which salvation may be obtained, by believing in Him. For He is that Bread of Life in which they must trust. The Jews themselves had referred to the manna in the wilderness and had called it bread from heaven. But what lasting value could be in food which did not sustain life beyond the few years of this earthly existence? Their fathers had died. But he that receives the Bread of Life by faith would have sustenance to carry him beyond this life into life eternal. Any one partaking of Him by faith will live forever. Jesus here gave a powerful testimony of His own person. By repeating the great facts which are the substance of His sermon, Jesus wants to work faith in the hearts of His hearers. The teaching concerning Jesus, His person and His office, the great facts of His salvation, is the means by which God

34) Luther, 7, 2286.

draws hearts to the Savior, works willingness to believe. And in one short statement Jesus also tells the manner in which He will earn salvation. He will give Himself, His body, His flesh, into death, for the sake of the life of the world. The human nature of Christ was sacrificed, was given for the salvation of the whole world, for all men without exception. In this way Jesus becomes the Bread of Life, the Bread from Heaven.

Life through Christ's sacrifice: V. 52. **The Jews, therefore, strove among themselves, saying, How can this Man give us His flesh to eat?** V. 53. **Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, ye have no life in you.** V. 54. **Whoso eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day.** V. 55. **For My flesh is meat indeed, and My blood is drink indeed.** V. 56. **He that eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood dwelleth in Me and I in him.** V. 57. **As the living Father hath sent Me, and I live by the Father, so he that eateth Me, even he shall live by Me.** V. 58. **This is that Bread which came down from heaven; not as your fathers did eat manna and are dead; he that eateth of this Bread shall live forever.** V. 59. **These things said He in the synagog, as He taught in Capernaum.** Although Jesus had been careful to explain His figure sufficiently that all might have understood Him, yet the understanding was lacking in the greater number of His hearers. There was a division, a dispute, among them. They differed in their judgment of Him. Some severely denounced Him as insane, others suggested that there might be some truth in His words. But they all thought of physical, sensual eating and partaking. Jesus therefore summarizes the lessons which He wishes to convey once more. He tells them that it is indeed essential for every one that wishes to have eternal life that he eat His flesh and drink His blood. It is necessary for every believer to receive Jesus altogether by faith, in His full work of atonement, active and passive obedience, shedding of blood, and all. By doing so, the believer has the assurance of eternal life and will rise on the last day to see the consummation of all glories. In this way the body of Christ is the true food, and His blood the true drink. In this way, also, the wonderful union of Christ and the believers in Him is brought about. They receive Christ spiritually and are most intimately and inseparably united with Him. They dwell in the Savior and the Savior in them. And this wonderful union extends still farther. The living Father has sent the Son; the Son, in that mysterious relationship which His eternal Sonship expresses, lives through the Father; and so both persons of the Godhead are the Fountainhead of life and give to the believer the fulness of perfect life, which will last throughout eternity. He that believes on the Son places his trust, first of all, in the human nature, in the man Jesus Christ that died for the sins of the whole world. But thereby he also accepts and clings to the divine nature, to the entire Godhead and all His gifts. Thus the human nature of Christ is like a bridge between God and man. He that believes in Jesus the Savior has the entire Christ in himself, according to both, divine and human natures, true God and man. That the Jews put their trust in the mere historical fact of the manna in the wilderness, believing that in some way they were partakers of the benefits that came upon their fathers at that time, was altogether foolish. Only by faith in Christ, the living Bread from heaven, can eternal life be obtained. — John remarks, with his usual exact specification of time and place, that this wonderful sermon was held in Capernaum, in the synagog. It is immaterial whether it was on a Sabbath or on one of the week-days when there were services, Monday or Thursday. Jesus gave a clear and unmistakable testimony concerning Himself, full of glorious comfort to the believer.

The Offense of Many Disciples.

John 6, 60—71.

The disciples murmur: V. 60. **Many, therefore, of His disciples, when they had heard this, said, This is an hard saying; who can hear it?** V. 61. **When Jesus knew in Himself that His disciples murmured at it, He said unto them, Doth this offend you?** V. 62. **What and if ye shall see the Son of Man ascend up where He was before?** V. 63. **It is the Spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing. The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.** V. 64. **But there are some of you that believe not. For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not, and who should betray Him.** V. 65. **And He said, Therefore said I unto you that no man can come unto Me except it were given unto him of My Father.** Jesus had gained a considerable number of followers in Galilee, people that were impressed by both His miracles and His preaching and therefore accompanied Him whenever they could. These people had just heard a wonderful sermon out of the mouth of the Master. They had learned that faith is a work which God desires of men, that Jesus is the Life-giver, that the grace of God in Jesus is universal, and that none is refused, that there is an election of grace by which those whom God has given to the Son become partakers of grace, that faith is the work of God, who draws to Christ, that the believers are sure of everlasting life, that there is a communication of attributes in the Godhead, between the divine and the human nature of Christ, that there is a mystical union between

God the Father and the Son and the believers. And yet some of these disciples were offended; they found it a hard saying that the flesh and blood of this Man should give eternal life. Although this dissatisfied grumbling went on softly, the omniscience of Jesus was fully aware of it and reproved them for taking occasion to stumble here. When they would see Him ascending up into heaven, whence He came down, they would either be scandalized all the more, or they would have to be convinced. They would then also understand what He meant when He said that they must eat His flesh. For then His weak human nature would be forever imbued and united with the divine, with the heavenly manner of being. His flesh would then be spiritualized, His body glorified. That would be a visible proof of the fact that He came down from heaven. Knowing this in advance, they should remember that the spirit is life-giving, that the flesh has no value. All material, earthly things that are associated with the sinful derivation of man have no value for spiritual life. Only the words of Christ contain spirit and life, give spirit and life. The reason for their offense therefore lies not in Christ, but in themselves: they do not believe. They depend upon human, carnal understanding and interpretation of everything about them; they refuse to let the Spirit of Christ work in them and give them life. From the beginning Jesus knew that there were such among His disciples as were no true believers; from the beginning also He knew His betrayer. Once more His earnest warning goes out to them that coming to Christ is a gift of God, who draws men through faith. The fact that there are unbelievers even among the disciples is a proof of the statement that no one can believe unless he receives this faith from the Father, that no one can come to Christ by his own strength. Note: The result of freely preaching the Gospel of the unvarnished truth as to the way of salvation is ever this, that some are offended; their self-righteousness and pride rebels against the idea of free grace and mercy.

The loyalty of the Twelve: V. 66. **From that time many of His disciples went back, and walked no more with Him.** V. 67. **Then said Jesus unto the Twelve, Will ye also go away?** V. 68. **Then Simon Peter answered Him, Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life.** V. 69. **And we believe and are sure that Thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God.** V. 70. **Jesus answered them, Have not I chosen you Twelve, and one of you is a devil?** V. 71. **He spake of Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon; for he it was that should betray Him, being one of the Twelve.** In spite of the warning of Jesus, a great many of those that had followed Him for some time deliberately turned from Jesus and no longer accompanied Him on His preaching-trips. They gave up their adherence to Christ, they withdrew openly from His presence. They had not stood the test of faith. It is ever thus. In the midst of the true believers there are always some whose faith is not sound, because it is not based upon the words and works of Jesus only. Jesus now turned to the Twelve, to the apostles whom He had chosen with such great care. They were here weathering a crisis, and He put the question to them, as well that they might be confirmed in their faith, as that He might be gladdened by their confession of it. His words are partly a question, partly an affirmation: Surely you do not want to go away also! And impetuous Peter, deeply moved by the defection of the great number, answers in the name of the Twelve: Lord, to whom shall we go away? The words of eternal life Thou hast; and we have believed and are certain in our knowledge that Thou art the Christ, the Holy One, the living Son of God, the Messiah of the world. The apostles had not taken offense at the words of Christ. In the midst of apostasy and hostility the faith of the true believers is approved. It is at such times that they cling all the more closely to the Rock of their salvation, not in sentimental emotion, but in sound trust in His Word, the Gospel of eternal life. Every one that has truly learned and gotten the firm conviction that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, the promised Redeemer of the world, has no intention, no desire to go away from Him. The truth and power of the Word has fully taken possession of his heart and mind. Note: Confession in Christ, the Savior, is confession in Christ, the Son of God, true God with the Father and the Holy Ghost. The answer of Jesus upon the glorious confession of Peter was charged with deep feeling and carried a warning, especially to one of the Twelve. For although Jesus had chosen them all in the same way and with the same seriousness, yet one of them was a devil at heart, and was merely hiding his denial and hostility under the hypocritical mask of loyalty. That was Judas Iscariot. In him the devil lived and had free play, he was Satan's willing victim and tool. That is a truly devilish crime, if a disciple, a believer, such as Judas was, that actually acknowledges Jesus as the Christ and has had many an experience in his Christian life, finally gives up his belief in the Savior and becomes an apostate. The example of Judas serves as an earnest warning to watch and to pray, lest faith be taken away and we commit the sin of Judas, betray our Lord and Savior.

Summary. *Jesus feeds five thousand men, walks on the Sea of Galilee, proclaims Himself as the Bread of Life in the school of Capernaum, corrects the false offense of many of His followers, and hears the confession of loyalty from Peter.*

"THE FLESH OF THE SON OF MAN."

Since the time of the Reformation, the Reformed sects, almost without exception, have understood the passage John 6, 51—63 of the Lord's Supper, in order to bolster up their false doctrine concerning a mere spiritual eating and drinking in the Eucharist. Their standpoint may be summarized in one sentence: "Even if Christ does give us His flesh in the Holy Supper, it still has no value; for everything depends upon the spirit."

That this position is untenable is evident from the very words. For if these words of the Lord did treat of the Lord's Supper, long before this Sacrament was instituted and known, then the real presence would certainly be taught here, a fact which all the followers of Zwingli would repudiate with the greatest severity. But the words in their connection cannot be understood but of the faith which accepts Jesus and all His works and merits. And the contrast between flesh and spirit in verse 63 has nothing whatever to do with the Eucharist, since it opposes the work of the Spirit of God to the unprofitable working of the natural condition of man. "Since, then, this is true and incontrovertible that flesh, where it is contrasted to spirit, cannot mean the body of Christ, but the old Adam, born of the flesh, it is certain, also, that here, John 6, 63, the words 'Flesh profiteth nothing' cannot be understood of the body of Christ, because Christ there places flesh in opposition to spirit. For thus His words sound clearly: It is the spirit that quickeneth, the flesh profiteth nothing; the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life. There you see plainly that He distinguishes between flesh and spirit and places the former in opposition to the latter. For He evidently teaches that life and spirit is in His words, and not in the flesh. Of the flesh He affirms that it is unprofitable. And how can it be profitable, if neither life nor spirit is found therein? If there is no life nor spirit therein, then there must be only death and sin therein. Which heretic has now been so desperate (excepting the Jews) as to understand this of the flesh of Christ? Now let the enthusiasts try themselves out; let us see what they can do; they have boasted that this was an iron wall and the certain truth; if they can make good their boast, I should like to see it."[35] "The eating and drinking is nothing but believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, who gave His flesh and blood for me, in order to deliver me from sin, death, devil, hell, and all misfortune. Such faith can never exist without life; therefore, he that believes must live and be just, as Habakkuk says, chap. 2, 4: The just shall live by faith. Therefore the eating is done with the heart and not with the mouth. The eating with the heart does not deceive, but the eating with the mouth does; the eating with the mouth will have an end, the other lasts eternally without interruption. For the heart is nourished and fed by faith in Christ. There you see plainly that these words are not to be understood of the Sacrament of the Altar. . . . Therefore to eat the flesh of the Son of God and to drink His blood, as has been said, is nothing else than that I believe His flesh was given for me and His blood was shed for me, and that for my sake He conquered sin, death, devil, hell, and all misfortune. Out of such faith there results a great and mighty confidence in Him and a scorn and bold courage against all misfortune, that I may henceforth fear nothing, neither sin nor death nor devil nor hell, since I know that my Lord cast them under His feet and conquered them for my sake." [36]

35) Luther, 20, 840; 7, 2376.
36) Luther, 11, 2252. 2253.

CHAPTER 7.

The Unbelief of Christ's Relatives.

John 7, 1—9.

The sneers of unbelief: V. 1. **After these things Jesus walked in Galilee; for He would not walk in Jewry, because the Jews sought to kill Him.** V. 2. **Now the Jews' Feast of Tabernacles was at hand.** V. 3. **His brethren therefore said unto Him, Depart hence and go into Judea that Thy disciples also may see the works that Thou doest;** v. 4. **for there is no man that doeth anything in secret, and he himself seeketh to be known openly. If Thou do these things, show Thyself to the world.** V. 5. **For neither did His brethren believe in Him.** The evangelist includes a space of about six months in one short sentence. Jesus had been at Jerusalem for the Feast of Purim, returning immediately to Galilee, where He delivered His great sermon on the Bread of Life, after the feeding of the five thousand. He remained in Galilee on account of the open hostility of the Jewish leaders in Judea, for it was an open secret that they were seeking to take His life. Meanwhile, however, the Feast of Tabernacles was approaching. This was the third great festival of the Jewish calendar, a great harvest festival, with special reference to the sojourn of the children of Israel in the wilderness. It was held on the 15th day of the seventh month, Tishri or Ethanim (October), and lasted seven days. The first day was a Sabbath with an holy convocation, and also the eighth day. Being the last harvest feast of thankfulness, it was the most joyous of all festive seasons in Israel. All the people erected booths made of boughs of goodly trees, branches of palm-trees, and the boughs of thick trees and willows of the brook, Lev. 23, 40. Christ's brothers (half-brothers, cousins) took the opportunity to jeer at Him. A prophet of the

Jews would be expected to perform his ministry, not in far-away Galilee, which was still known as the Galilee of the Gentiles, but in Jerusalem. Since Jesus therefore openly made the claim that He was a great Prophet, these brothers sneeringly urged Him to go to Judea and there publicly, before the whole world, reveal Himself as the King of Israel. His disciples would then also have a further chance to see miracles which He would perform in the capital to establish His position. The brothers of Jesus try to back up their challenge with a common saying, that no one does things in secret and then demands public recognition. Their argument was that He should not confine His activities to hidden and far-away corners, if He wanted to be accepted as the Messiah. He should show Himself and His miracles in public, before the whole world. The brothers of Jesus thus revealed their unbelief in Him and His work.

The refusal of Jesus: V. 6. **Then Jesus said unto them, My time is not yet come, but your time is alway ready.** V. 7. **The world cannot hate you; but Me it hateth because I testify of it that the works thereof are evil.** V. 8. **Go ye up unto this feast; I go not up yet unto this feast; for My time is not yet full come.** V. 9. **When He had said these words unto them, He abode still in Galilee.** Jesus refused to listen to the proposals of His brothers. His time for revealing Himself publicly, especially in the manner which their suggestion implied, had not yet come. In the sense of their words He never wanted to become King of Israel, a temporal, earthly ruler. In His own way and at His own time He wanted to reveal Himself as the Son of God and the Savior of the world. But for His brothers it was always time to show themselves before the world. In the disposition which they exhibited at that time, they fitted in very well with the other mockers and scoffers. They were in no danger, for they were among friends in Jerusalem. The world, the wicked, hostile Jewish leaders, could not hate the brothers, for they shared the same opinion, they adhered to the same idea. But the testimony of Jesus concerning the works of this same world branded Him in their eyes as an enemy, whom they therefore hated with all the intensity of the hatred of darkness for the light. If Jesus had merely referred to notorious sins, blasphemy, murder, robbery, adultery, the leaders of the Jews would have agreed with Him readily, holding up, at the same time, pious hands in sanctimonious horror over the depravity of the rabble. But since Jesus points a revealing finger at them and rebukes their hypocrisy and lack of true charity, they are scandalized at His insinuations, and all the more, since their own consciences could not gainsay His words. As long as a preacher speaks in general terms of depravity and sin, the assenting nods come from all directions, but when he makes the application to the individual, hidden sins and holds forth on the personal responsibility, the situation changes very quickly. But Jesus urged His brothers to go up to Jerusalem, to attend to their duty as members of the Jewish Church. His time for manifesting Himself publicly had not yet come, and He did not wish to go up for the display which they believed He should make in establishing His claims. For the time being, He stayed in Galilee.

Jesus at the Feast of Tabernacles.

John 7, 10—53.

The murmuring concerning Jesus: V. 10. **But when His brethren were gone up, then went He also up unto the feast, not openly, but, as it were, in secret.** V. 11. **Then the Jews sought Him at the feast and said, Where is He?** V. 12. **And there was much murmuring among the people concerning Him; for some said, He is a good man; others said, Nay; but He deceiveth the people.** V. 13. **Howbeit no man spake openly of Him for fear of the Jews.** Jesus let His brothers, with their peculiar ideas concerning Messianic revelations, go up to the capital alone. But after they were gone, He started out on His journey to the feast, with none of the publicity which they had recommended. It was for that reason that He had refused to go with them openly, because the attention which it would draw on the way and on His arrival in Jerusalem would not be beneficial to the cause. He went secretly, in order not to cause excitement and to irritate the Jews into such a mental condition that they would carry out their murderous design at once. The object of His journey was only to teach in Jerusalem once more, to preach the Gospel of redemption through His Word and work. But many of the Jews were expecting Him; they were making inquiries concerning Him and His whereabouts. But all this was done quietly, in order not to arouse attention. Even the disputatious murmuring and wrangling concerning Him and His work was done under cover. Some in the multitude took His part, considering Him a good man, whose intentions could not be bad; others just as vehemently denounced Him as a seducer and deceiver of the people. But all this had to be done in strict secrecy; their discussions had to be suppressed and be carried on in low tones. All waited for the authorities of the Church to give their decision. Note: The unbelievers of all times may be classified in much the same manner as in this passage. The one class believes Jesus to be a champion of virtue, the other holds the opinion that He is a deliberate liar and cheat.

The appearance of Jesus at the festival: V. 14. **Now about the midst of the feast Jesus went up into the Temple and taught.** V. 15. **And the Jews marveled, saying, How knoweth this man letters, having never**

learned? V. 16. **Jesus answered them and said, My doctrine is not Mine, but His that sent Me.** V. 17. **If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God, or whether I speak of Myself.** V. 18. **He that speaketh of himself seeketh his own glory; but He that seeketh His glory that sent Him, the same is true, and no unrighteousness is in Him.** V. 19. **Did not Moses give you the Law, and yet none of you keepeth the Law? Why go ye about to kill Me?** Since the atmosphere was now cleared of any danger of a carnal uprising, Jesus felt no hesitation about going up to the Temple about the middle of the festival-week and doing His work as Teacher, attending to the duties of His prophetic office. He did this in the face of Jewish hostility, because it was part of the labor of love which He had come to perform, though His human nature may have had scruples and fears. "St. John describes this for consolation, that no one should concern himself about it and worry, if God gives Himself the semblance of weakness and the world glories and boasts; you must get used to it; also, if the Christians, but especially the preachers, are weak and shy, and their adversaries, the great, powerful men, paw and threaten. That is nothing new, and it does not happen only to us, but the prophets and apostles had the same experience that they seemed weak before the tyrants, but in their weakness they were strongest; yea, it happened thus even to Christ the Lord, who is a Lord of all prophets and apostles. He feigns weakness, just as though He wanted to give up His office of preaching and not be obedient to God, and as though He were badly terrified; while He, in that same weakness, went directly forward." 37) Not only the fact that Jesus taught, but especially the content of His teaching surprised the Jews. They asked one another where this man had gotten His knowledge. He had not taken the course which was prescribed for the regular scribes and rabbis, and yet He could teach. "The Jewish learning consisted in the knowledge of their own Scriptures and the traditions of their elders. In this learning our blessed Lord excelled. No person ever spoke with more grace and dignity, or knew better how to make a more proper use, or a happier application, of Jewish allegories and parables; because none ever penetrated the sense of the Scriptures as He did; none ever cited them more successfully, or ever showed their accomplishment in so complete and satisfactory a manner. As these branches of learning were taught at the Jewish schools, and our Lord had never attended there, they were astonished to find Him excelling in that sort of learning, of which they themselves professed to be the sole teachers." 38) Jesus gave the Jews an explanation of this wonderful feat. The teaching which He delivered before them had its source not in His own knowledge, but in Him that sent Him. He was not giving them a summary of human ideas and philosophy, but the eternal truth of His heavenly Father. Note the careful way in which Christ expresses Himself: it is His doctrine, and yet it is not His doctrine. What He was teaching was the truth, and He delivered it with the firm conviction of its eternal truth; and incidentally it was the revelation of the innermost essence of God. This same conviction must live in the heart of every true preacher of the Gospel. "In the same manner I say also: The Gospel is mine, to distinguish it from the doctrine of all other preachers that otherwise do not hold my doctrine. Therefore I say: This is mine, Luther's, doctrine; and yet I say also: It is not my doctrine, it is not in my hand, but it is the gift of God. For I did not invent it out of my head, it did not grow in my garden, nor bubble up out of my fountain, nor was it born out of me; but it is God's gift, and not an invention of men. Thus both sayings are true: The doctrine is mine, and yet it is not mine, for it is God's, the heavenly Father's, and yet I preach and teach such doctrine." 39)

Jesus now suggests to the Jews a test by which they may try out the truth of His doctrine. The Jews were always boasting of the Law, of the will of God. Here was a chance to put the claims of Jesus to a test. They should take the will of God and earnestly begin the practise of it, they should bend all their efforts toward fulfilling the Law. The first result of such endeavor would be that they must realize their utter inability to keep it properly. Every one that tries to merit salvation by keeping the will of God in the Law will soon come to the conclusion that it is beyond human ability. Only the doctrine of Jesus, the Gospel, will give strength to fulfil the will of God. And therefrom will follow the second conclusion, that the doctrine of Jesus must be from God, that He has divine authority for His teaching and does not present His own philosophy. Jesus here places Himself in direct contrast to preachers that preach their own wisdom. There are such that preach their own mind, teach their own ideas, and they have only one aim: they strive after their own glory. That is true of all the modern so-called preachers that feed the people the husks of their own religious systems, that have discourses on every question under the sun but that which has reference to the salvation of their hearers. There is no honor and glory before men in preaching the old-fashioned Gospel of the forgiveness of sins through the merits of Christ, and therefore these preachers select such topics as will give them opportunity to display their wit or their learning, or the absence of both. They want a great name be-

37) Luther, 8, 20.

38) Clarke, *Commentary*, 5, 568.

39) Luther, 8, 27.

fore men, and cheap notoriety they usually achieve. But with Christ (and with all true Christian preachers) it is different. Christ is seeking the glory of God, therefore He is true, sure, faithful, dependable, and there is no unrighteousness in Him. Only one that leads a morally blameless life is properly a preacher of divine truth, only he will work in the right manner for the glory of God. But the Jews, far from practising the will of God and living up to its injunctions, did not keep the Law. Their leaders were even then making plans to remove Jesus, to put Him out of the way by murdering Him. The Jews are a picture of all self-righteous people in the world. They insist upon outward order, piety and right moral living, but they are opposed to the doctrine of Christ. But this attitude proves that they are not sincere in their pretensions. If they would make an honest effort to fulfil the entire Law in all its mandates and implications, they would find out how utterly helpless they are, and would turn to the Gospel as the one means of salvation. It is only he that accepts the Gospel and believes its glorious message that can hope in any way to fulfil the will of God.

A reference to the healing of the sick man: V. 20. **The people answered and said, Thou hast a devil; who goeth about to kill Thee?** V. 21. **Jesus answered and said unto them, I have done one work, and ye all marvel.** V. 22. **Moses therefore gave unto you circumcision; (not because it is of Moses, but of the fathers;) and ye on the Sabbath-day circumcise a man.** V. 23. **If a man on the Sabbath-day receive circumcision that the Law of Moses should not be broken, are ye angry at Me because I have made a man every whit whole on the Sabbath-day?** V. 24. **Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment.** The remarks of Jesus were directed principally to the leaders of the Jews, some of whom were always present whenever He taught. The fact that the Lord read their thoughts so easily and openly accused them of their heinous intention aroused the Jews. Their bad conscience prompted them to deny vociferously and vehemently that they had harbored such intention. They told Him that He must be possessed with an evil spirit even to insinuate such a thing. But Jesus refuses to be turned aside from His argument. He knows exactly when their hostility entered into this stage. A matter of six months ago He performed one single miracle, on account of which they were astonished and offended; it was His healing of the man on the Sabbath. But they were to take their own case. They had the rite of circumcision, an ordinance which went beyond Moses, to the patriarchs, but which Moses formally codified. This rite continued through all their generations and regularly set aside the Sabbath law. For circumcision involved an act, a work, and yet it was performed on the Sabbath, if the time so required. This was not considered a breaking of the Sabbath law, because the Jewish baby was thereby received into the congregation. In the case of circumcision it was only ceremonial purity which was effected, but Jesus had made the whole man well on the Sabbath. He therefore scored the sanctimoniousness of the Jews in emphasizing the outward observance of the Sabbath, while they actually transgressed the letter of the Law with every Sabbath circumcision, and then threw up their hands in horror at the great benefit which Christ had granted to the sick man on the Sabbath. Such sanctimonious exclusiveness is the very essence of hypocrisy and lacks altogether that mercy which the Lord demands rather than sacrifice. The Lord therefore tells them that they should consider and weigh the facts of the evidence properly. They should not judge according to appearances, as matters appear on the surface, at first glance. A righteous and true judgment depends upon careful consideration and weighing of all evidence. This same argument should be used against the fanatics of all kinds in our days. They have, in regard to many questions, lost all sense of proportion and must be reminded of the fundamental principles.

The origin of Jesus: V. 25. **Then said some of them of Jerusalem, Is not this He whom they seek to kill?** V. 26. **But, lo, He speaketh boldly, and they say nothing unto Him. Do the rulers know indeed that this is the very Christ?** V. 27. **Howbeit we know this man whence He is; but when Christ cometh, no man knoweth whence He is.** V. 28. **Then cried Jesus in the Temple as He taught, saying, Ye both know Me, and ye know whence I am; and I am not come of Myself, but He that sent Me is true, whom ye know not.** V. 29. **But I know Him; for I am from Him, and He hath sent Me.** V. 30. **Then they sought to take Him; but no man laid hands on Him, because His hour was not yet come.** A diversion was created at this point by the inquiry of some local people that may have come upon the scene at that moment. They were surprised at Christ's teaching so openly. He was surely the man whom the chief men in the nation had sought to kill and were even then planning to put out of the way. The inference was that the rulers had been convinced as to the truth of Christ's claims and were reconsidering their intention of putting Him to death. But this idea, in turn, is dismissed, as the babblers continue to express their conviction that they knew the origin of this man who was teaching before them; but concerning the Christ, the Messiah, the supposition had gained ground that no one would know whence He would come. This idea was due to a misunderstanding of some Old Testament passages referring to the eternity of the Messiah and to sections of apocryphal literature which were

circulating among the Jews in those days. In this man Jesus they saw nothing miraculous. His powerful testimony of His heavenly origin they did not believe, and the miracles which He did in healing the sick were insignificant in their eyes. Their position is shared by a great many modern critics, the foolishness of whose reason renders them just as blind. Jesus, in the midst of this excited babel of voices, purposely cried out loudly at this point, to attract attention to Himself and to His words. For the sake of getting their interest, He places Himself on their side. They thought they knew whence He was; a bit of scornful irony. Their entire ideas concerning the Messiah were indistinct and hazy, and just as foolish were their conjectures as to His origin. They should know that Jesus did not presume upon the mission which He is now trying to fulfil. It is in truth and beyond all doubt God that sent Him. But of the essence of this God, the heavenly Father, they had not the faintest idea in spite of all their boasting. He that does not know the Son cannot understand the essence of the Father. Jesus is well acquainted with the Father, for He has His ministry, His ambassadorship, from Him. For the Jews to draw this conclusion from their knowledge of Christ's origin that He was a self-constituted prophet and therefore not the Messiah, is to make the biggest mistake that is possible in the wide world. This frank statement again made the Jews angry; they sought to seize Him; their hands fairly itched to be laid upon Him in revenging fury. But they were held back by a power that lamed their hands, for the hour of Jesus had not yet come. The time when He should enter into the glory of His Father by the path of suffering and death was not yet at hand. The enemies of Christ can do nothing unless God gives them permission.

The anxiety of the Pharisees: V. 31. **And many of the people believed on Him and said, When Christ cometh, will He do more miracles than these which this man hath done?** V. 32. **The Pharisees heard that the people murmured such things concerning Him; and the Pharisees and the chief priests sent officers to take Him.** V. 33. **Then said Jesus unto them, Yet a little while am I with you, and then I go unto Him that sent Me.** V. 34. **Ye shall seek Me, and shall not find Me; and where I am, thither ye cannot come.** V. 35. **Then said the Jews among themselves, Whither will He go that we shall not find Him? Will He go unto the dispersed among the Gentiles, and teach the Gentiles?** V. 36. **What manner of saying is this that He said, Ye shall seek Me, and shall not find Me; and where I am, thither ye cannot come?** The immediate result of Christ's testimony regarding Himself was that He gained believers, disciples, people who were sure that, should Christ come later, as the rulers were trying to make the Jews believe, He would not be able to do greater miracles than this man. The Word of God is never without fruit. There are always some that are converted by the power of its arguments, even if the majority of men in the world thrust their salvation from them. But now the word was passed to the Pharisees that many people were yielding to the persuasion of Christ's preaching, that they were spreading their conviction in covert discussions and gaining new adherents. This state of affairs displeased them very highly, and they immediately brought the matter to the attention of the Sanhedrin for quick action. The result was that servants, very likely members of the Temple-guard, were dispatched to apprehend Jesus. The purpose of the Jewish rulers was actually to arrest Jesus and thus to put an end to His teaching. But Jesus, in the presence of these very men that came to arrest Him, continued His testimony. It would be only a short while, until His earthly work would be accomplished, until His work as Substitute for all mankind on earth would be finished. But when the salvation would have been gained, then He would return to His heavenly Father, who had sent and commissioned Him for His great work. It was an urgent invitation to all hearers to make use of the short time of grace still remaining. For the hour would come, as Jesus warningly calls out to them, that they would seek Him, incidentally reproaching themselves bitterly for their blindness. Cp. Luke 23, 29. 30. In the midst of the terrors preceding the final destruction of Jerusalem the Jews clung with the hope of despair to the promise of their foolish leaders that the Messiah would yet come to liberate them. But it was a delusion and a false hope. It was too late. They had rejected the true Messiah and could expect no salvation from one that was false. Every person that neglects the time and opportunity when salvation and mercy is offered to him will receive his punishment in this way, that he will realize his folly when it is too late, when Christ has withdrawn from him and he vainly curses his rejection of the salvation earned for him also. The Lord tells the Jews that it will be impossible for them to come to the place where He would be at that time. They cannot follow Him, cannot enter into heaven to seek Him. No unbeliever can expect to enter into heaven, if he consistently rejects Jesus and His mercy; the place of eternal bliss and glory will be altogether inaccessible to him. The Jews again did not understand the Savior. Their minds were so steeped in their carnal understanding of the teaching which they usually heard that they had lost the ability to penetrate into spiritual matters. They foolishly conjectured that His going away meant that He intended to visit the Jews that lived in the so-called Diaspora, in other countries outside of Palestine, in Egypt, Asia Minor, and elsewhere, and that He probably would try to have the Gentiles accept

His doctrine, since He had such little success with His own countrymen. Their entire talk was intended as mockery, but it proved to contain a grain of truth, and was in a manner of speaking prophetical. It actually did happen as the Jews here jeeringly intimated. Since they rejected the Word of salvation, the Lord turned to the Gentiles and issued to them the full and free call to redemption in His blood. And as for these scoffers, they soon found out, they and their children, that God is not mocked.

Jesus the Living Water: V. 37. **In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto Me and drink.** V. 38. **He that believeth on Me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.** V. 39. **(But this spake He of the Spirit which they that believe on Him should receive; for the Holy Ghost was not yet given because that Jesus was not yet glorified.)** It was on the last day of the Feast of Tabernacles, the "day of the great Hosannah," on which the leaves of the willows and the other branches that had been used for the building of the booths were shaken off and the palm branches were waved against the altar, when the priests went around the altar seven times in a procession of thankfulness, and when a priest was commissioned to get a pitcher of water from the pool of Siloam and then pour it out at the side of the altar. All these ceremonies had been introduced in the course of time, and the Jewish teachers had explained some of them, especially the last, as a symbol which would find its fulfilment in the days of the Messiah. The proclamation of Jesus at this point was therefore very important and significant. He not only applied the words Is. 12, 3 to Himself, but indicated that all other prophecies which were connected with this festival had found their fulfilment in Him. The water of the pool of Siloam was considered living water, since it was replenished from time to time by means of a natural siphon from a spring in the rock. But, after all, it was only earthly water, which could quench the thirst for only a short while. But those whose soul thirsts for God, as the hart panteth after the waterbrooks, Ps. 42, 1. 2, must go to the Savior for their soul's refreshment. For in the salvation earned through Christ's Passion and death there is full satisfaction for the desire of all humble souls for mercy and forgiveness. Jesus is the fountain of living water, for in Him there is true, everlasting life. Every one that accepts Him and His salvation will never again be tortured with thirst, for he will possess the fulness of God's mercy. And that is not all. The believer will himself become a fountain of living water, Is. 58, 11; 44, 3. The Spirit, who has entered into his heart in regeneration, has worked spiritual life in him. This life daily gains in strength and willingness. It must manifest itself in deeds of the Spirit, in good works. There will daily be a new and full supply of knowledge and love, through the work of the Holy Spirit, given to all believers. At that time indeed the great revelation of the Spirit, the Pentecostal miracle, had not yet taken place; Jesus had not yet finished His earthly work, to enter into the glory of His Father. But the work of the Spirit in the Word is efficient at all times; sanctification is His peculiar office and ministry. The Spirit has now been revealed as He that glorified Christ. We have a greater measure of His manifestations in our days than the believers of the Old Testament had, Joel 2, 28. "At the time when Jesus preached, He promised the Holy Spirit, and therefore the Holy Spirit was not yet there; not that He was not in existence in His nature, in heaven, but that He was not manifested in His revelation and in His work. For that is the special work and office of the Holy Spirit that He reveal and glorify Christ, that He preach and give testimony concerning Him. This office was then not yet in active working; the office of glorifying Christ the Lord was not yet in use, that is, the preaching of the forgiveness of sins, and how one may be delivered from death, have comfort and joy in Christ, that it concerns us: all this was at that time unheard of and not mentioned; that deliverance, salvation, righteousness, joy, and life should be given us through that man, Christ, whom people did not know at that time." 40)

The effect of the sermon: V. 40. **Many of the people, therefore, when they heard this saying, said, Of a truth this is the Prophet.** V. 41. **Others said, This is the Christ. But some said, Shall Christ come out of Galilee?** V. 42. **Hath not the Scripture said, That Christ cometh of the seed of David; and out of the town of Bethlehem, where David was?** V. 43. **So there was a division among the people because of Him.** V. 44. **And some of them would have taken Him; but no man laid hands on Him.** Both the words and the manner of Jesus upon this occasion made a profound impression, but the people were impressed in various ways. Some of them were ready to believe that He was that great prophet of whom Moses had prophesied, Deut. 18, 15, whom they did not identify with the Messiah. Others had gained the conviction that He must be the Christ Himself. That was a fine confession of faith. But others were present that ridiculed His Galilean ancestry, as they believed that Jesus had been born in Galilee. They were familiar with the prophecy according to which the Messiah was to be born at Bethlehem, and their assumption as to His Galilean derivation clashed with this prophecy. So public opinion was divided on this occasion. Note: Whenever there is a difference of opinion in regard to the person and office of Christ, or

40) Luther, 8, 29.

in regard to any doctrine of the Gospel, the reason is not to be sought on the part of Jesus, but in the perverse understanding of man. A careful searching of Scriptures and a diligent comparison of the various parts of Scriptures will always result in absolute clearness with regard to all the doctrines which are necessary for salvation. Where this is not done, the judgment pronounced upon unbelievers will strike such people, and their understanding will be darkened all the more with the passing of time. Some of the Jews in the multitude were so hardened to the proclamation of the Gospel that they wanted to arrest Him, but the intention died in its inception, and the uplifted hands sank down powerlessly. God Himself tied their hands, for the hour of Jesus was not yet come.

The report of the guard: V. 45. **Then came the officers to the chief priests and Pharisees; and they said unto them, Why have ye not brought Him?** V. 46. **The officers answered, Never man spake like this man.** V. 47. **Then answered them the Pharisees, Are ye also deceived?** V. 48. **Have any of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed on Him?** V. 49. **But this people, who knoweth not the Law, are cursed.** V. 50. **Nicodemus saith unto them, (he that came to Jesus by night, being one of them,)** v. 51. **Doth our Law judge any man before it hear him and know what he doeth?** V. 52. **They answered and said unto him, Art thou also of Galilee? Search and look; for out of Galilee ariseth no prophet.** V. 53. **And every man went unto his own house.** The Temple-guards that had been commissioned with the arrest of the Lord had been willing enough to perform their task. They had kept a close watch upon Jesus these four days. But the very fact that they were in the neighborhood of Jesus and thus heard much of His teaching had a powerful effect upon them. They returned to their masters without having carried out their commission. They were received with the reproachful question: Why brought ye Him not? The guards gave no direct answer, but tried to evade the question with the excuse that no mere man had ever spoken like this man Jesus. It was, in a way, a confession of His divinity. They were not yet openly won for His cause, but they also could no longer take the part of His adversaries. The Word of God is mighty in the midst of its enemies. They had felt the force, the divine power of His words. But their apology only rouses the wrath of the Jewish rulers. Was it possible, they ask, that even these trusted henchmen were deluded and deceived? What right have these subordinates to have a mind of their own? They should simply accept what their leaders tell them and not be influenced by the opinion of the masses. For that low crowd, in the opinion of the Pharisees, that did not know the Law and all the traditions as they themselves did, were a cursed lot, an execrable rabble. Note: The arguments here advanced by the Jewish leaders sound exactly like those of the so-called fashionable Christians in our days that have thrown the Bible overboard as the inspired Word of God and have only pity for the poor deluded, unlearned Lutherans and their like that insist upon accepting Jesus as the Savior of the world, through the atonement made by His blood.

It was at this point that Nicodemus, who had gotten his information concerning heavenly things directly from Jesus and knew what he was talking about, interfered. Though he was a member of the Pharisees, he did not share their views in this matter. He demanded whether it was in accordance with the Law of which they were continually boasting to condemn a man without giving him a fair hearing. It is characteristic of the hypocrites in high places that they refuse to accept any opinion but their own. Their conceit is equaled only by their denseness. But the objection of Nicodemus took them aback somewhat. They had not expected opposition in their own midst. Angrily they tell him that he himself seems to be becoming a Galilean, a follower of this hated Nazarene. They meant to say that despised Galilee was not the true country of the prophets, that most of them were from Judea and Jerusalem. But their assertion was too strong. There were one or two exceptions to the rule which they state so arbitrarily. The Prophet Jonah came from Galilee. And there was a prophecy stating that the light of the Messiah would shine upon that northern country in a most marvelous manner, Is. 9, 1. 2. And so the meeting of the Sanhedrin ended in a deadlock; it broke up without further action against Jesus. The guiding hand of God is plainly seen in all the circumstances of this incident.

Summary. *Jesus reproves the unbelief of His brothers, journeys to the Feast of Tabernacles at Jerusalem, and testifies concerning His person and office, gaining some adherents and confounding even the servants of the Sanhedrin.*

CHAPTER 8.

The Woman Taken in Adultery.

John 8, 1—11.

The arraignment of the guilty woman: V. 1. **Jesus went into the Mount of Olives.** V. 2. **And early in the morning He came again into the Temple, and all the people came unto Him; and He sat down and taught them.** V. 3. **And the scribes and Pharisees brought unto Him a woman taken in adultery; and when they had set her in the midst,** v. 4. **they say unto Him, Master, this woman was taken in adultery, in the very act.** V. 5. **Now Moses in the Law commanded us that such should be stoned; but what sayest Thou?** V. 6. **This they said, tempting Him, that they might have to accuse Him. But Jesus stooped down, and with His finger wrote on the ground, as though He heard them not.** The members of the Sanhedrin, after the excited discussion which broke up their meeting, went each one to his house. But Jesus, having no home or definite place of sojourn in Jerusalem, went to the Mount of Olives, very likely to the town of Bethany, where His friends Martha, Mary, and Lazarus lived, in whose house He was always a welcome guest. But very early the next morning, as soon as the Temple-gates were opened for the morning sacrifices, He was back again, to continue His work of teaching the people. The Lord was indefatigable in His labors for the salvation of mankind, a shining example to all His servants. Jesus had no trouble in getting an audience; all the people that came to the Temple went to Him, and He addressed the assembly, teaching them words of eternal life. As a teacher in the Temple-school, as a teacher in the house of God, He sat before the people and instructed them. But the scribes and Pharisees, whose vindictive hatred would hardly give them any rest, were planning some way of taking the Lord unawares and ruining His standing with the common people. They brought an adulteress and placed her before Him, indicating that they were arraigning her before Him as judge. This was an altogether irregular proceeding, for they had their church-courts, as well as their civil judges; but they were seeking occasion against Him. The woman was placed in the midst, to expose her shame before all, whereupon they stated their accusation, incidentally addressing Jesus, with mock courtesy, as "teacher." There could be no doubt as to the guilt of the woman; it was a plain case of a flagrant transgression. But to the scribes and Pharisees the fate of the woman evidently was a secondary consideration, especially since the old church-laws were no longer carried out in all their stringency. They state the ordinance of Moses in a case of this kind, cp. Lev. 20, 10; Deut. 22, 22. 23; Lev. 21, 9 Ezek. 16, 38. 40, but in a way implying a contrast between the Old Testament teacher and Jesus, for their question is: What now sayest Thou? It was a malicious temptation, and in no way an innocent questioning; their object was to find some accusation against Him. "Where shall He now go, the poor man Christ, when every avenue of escape is shut off? If He should keep silence, that would not agree very well. If He says Yes, it is against His preaching; if He says No, it is against Moses." [41] But His enemies were disappointed, for Jesus, having stooped down, wrote on the ground with His finger, not for shame of the deed itself and the brazen hardness of the persecutors, as has been stated, but in order to convey to them, in a most emphatic way, that He wanted nothing to do with this matter, that it in no way concerned Him, but was a matter for their courts. The punishment of adultery was the business of the government. The idea of inveigling Him into an apparent opposition to the Law of Moses did not appeal to Him. It was a deliberate, an accusing silence. Note: If only all people to whose attention the shame and disgrace of a neighbor's sin is brought would assume at once this reproachful silence! It would effectually stop malignant gossiping.

The Savior's solution: V. 7. **So when they continued asking Him, He lifted up Himself, and said unto them, He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her.** V. 8. **And again He stooped down, and wrote on the ground.** V. 9. **And they which heard it, being convicted by their own conscience, went out one by one, beginning at the eldest, even unto the last; and Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst.** V. 10. **When Jesus had lifted up Himself, and saw none but the woman, He said unto her, Woman, where are those thine accusers? Hath no man condemned thee?** V. 11. **She said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee; go, and sin no more.** The fact that the Lord so pointedly ignored their question nettled the scribes and Pharisees. They persisted in their questioning; their importunity bordered on impudence. And so the Lord finally straightened up and put a question to them, in the form of a permission to carry out their aim with respect to the accused woman. The sinless one of them should cast the first stone upon the woman. Christ did not shield, did not excuse the sinner; He did not utter one word in extenuation of her guilt. But His words were a most emphatic and cutting reproof for the self-sufficient Pharisees that were often guilty, in secret, of all the sins in the Decalog. Having made this statement, the Lord once more bent down and wrote on the ground. Whether He wrote actual words and connected sentences or merely traced figures in the sand, is an idle speculation. But His man

[41] Luther, 8, 125.

ner conveyed the reproof more loudly than if He had shouted it, condemning them and their self-righteous sanctimoniousness. And the effect was all that could be desired. For once, under the prodding of Christ's words, the consciences of the scribes and Pharisees became active. Undoubtedly the dignity and majesty, the solemn, searching earnestness of the Lord did much to add to the weight of His rebuke. And so, one by one, they began to file out of the hall, the older ones leading, and the others following in due course. They might have brazened the matter out before others, before mere men, but they made a miserable failure of it before the majesty of Jesus. "This, then, is the difference between the kingdom of Christ and the kingdom of the world, that Christ makes all men sinners. But He does not let that be the end, but it follows that He absolves her." 42) All the accusers having left, and the audience and the disciples having removed to a respectful distance, there was only Jesus and the woman left in the area, in the midst of the hall where this incident took place. And Jesus now purposely permitted the silence to continue, in order to prove effective. For He was most truly angry and provoked at the sin, but His Savior's heart was overflowing with mercy and love for the sinner. But at last Jesus straightened up once more and addressed Himself to the woman, who was now standing there in the abject misery and shame of her repentance. He asked her: Where are they? Has no man condemned thee? And when she answered: None, Lord, thus voicing her humble pleading for mercy and her belief in Him as the Savior of sinners, He spoke the words of absolution. Neither would He condemn her, although He, the Sinless One, might well have done so; not the death, but the life of sinners, was the object of Christ's work. But He adds an emphatic warning that she should go, and sin no more. He that sins after receiving the grace of the Savior, he that wilfully and deliberately persists in spurning the merciful love of the Redeemer of which He once became the partaker, has only himself to blame, if the time of grace is brought to a sudden close and his unbelief is punished in accordance with the magnitude of its guilt. Note: This story teaches, in a most effective manner, the necessity of practising merciful charity toward the fallen sinner and to win him back, if possible, to the way of righteousness. The uncharitable attitude which is often taken, by so-called Christians, toward those that have fallen, has, times without number, resulted in the final hardening of the sinner's heart, while the willingness to help in a spirit of Christlike forgiveness has resulted in making a new person. "Therefore only those sinners belong into the kingdom of Christ that acknowledge and feel their sins, and then eagerly catch at the word of Christ which He here speaks and says: I do not condemn thee; they are the kingdom of Christ. He does not permit the saints to enter, He blows them all out, He thrusts everything out of the Church that wants to be holy in itself. But if sinners enter, they do not remain sinners, He places the mantle (of His righteousness) over them and says: Wherever thou hast sinned, I forgive thee thy sin, and cover it over." 43)

42) Luther, 8, 131.

Jesus the Light of the World.

John 8, 12—30.

Christ's statement and the Jews' objection: V. 12. **Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the Light of the world; he that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the Light of Life.** V. 13. **The Pharisees therefore said unto Him, Thou bearest record of Thyself; Thy record is not true.** V. 14. **Jesus answered and said unto them, Though I bear record of Myself, yet My record is true; for I know whence I came and whither I go; but ye cannot tell whence I come and whither I go.** V. 15. **Ye judge after the flesh; I judge no man.** V. 16. **And yet if I judge, My judgment is true; for I am not alone, but I and the Father that sent Me.** After this incident of the woman and her accusers, Jesus was again at liberty to continue His teaching. The one company of Pharisees that had caused the interruption had left, but there were still some in the audience. In His discourse Jesus told His hearers: I am the Light of the world. He may have alluded to two ceremonies of the Jews. It was customary to light the four great candelabra in the Court of the Women on the first day of the Feast of Tabernacles, with appropriate ceremonies. Their light shone forth over the entire city and the vicinity and signified that salvation was to come from the Jews. But He may also have had reference to a ceremony on the day after the official close of the festival, the "feast of joy for the Law." On that day all the sacred books were taken out of the chest where they were commonly kept, and a lighted candle was put in their place, in allusion to Prov. 6, 23 or Ps. 119, 105. Jesus is the true Light of the world; from Him, as the Fountainhead and source of all spiritual enlightenment, the rays of salvation and glory have gone forth to illumine all men, John 1, 7—9; Is. 49, 6; 60, 3. 19. Any follower, any believer in Jesus, has not merely a chart, but a Guide, an infallible Leader. He will never lead the way into darkness, but will scatter the darkness in the way of His followers. And He gives such light to the souls of men through faith in Him, that it will serve as a lodestar for them to the everlasting mansions of life above. All darkness of ignorance, infidelity, and sin is dispelled before the illumination of Christ in the Gospel, until finally the glorious light of heaven will

43) Luther, 8, 134.

definitely put an end to all hiding and obscuring veils and present the Savior in the everlasting glory of His work of redemption. The salvation of Christ therefore consists in this, that He gives the true, divine life. "To follow Christ means to obey His words, to preach that He has suffered and died for us; that is to obey His words in faith. He that believes on Him, clings to Him, trusts in Him, he will be saved, he follows Christ in faith, he holds on to the Light." 44) But this statement again offended the Pharisees in the audience. The fact itself they did not dare to assail, but they disputed its formal validity. A man's testimony concerning himself has no value, it is no testimony, in fact. The answer of Jesus showed that He recognized the correctness of this axiom in general. But His case did not come under that rule, it was different on account of His divine origin. His testimony concerning Himself is true, because He knows whence He has come and where He is going. He has an existence, a being, which goes beyond birth and death. From another world He came down into this world, and, when His time is come, He will return to that other world whence He had His origin. Of these facts the Jews had no idea and understanding; their thoughts were chained to the conceptions of this life. And that was their own fault, since they refused to believe. Therefore it was impossible for them to do anything but to judge falsely with reference to Christ. They judge according to the flesh, according to appearances, without going into the essence of matters, though the latter was an absolute necessity in the case of Jesus. The Lord Himself, by contrast, condemns no man in His capacity as Savior. He confines Himself to witnessing, and does not sit in judgment, chap. 3, 17. But if He does pronounce judgment, then His verdict is always correct and just. He did not come into the world for the purpose of judging, reproving, condemning the world, for He is the Light, the Salvation of the world. But He must sometimes set aside His original, His real purpose in and for this world, in order to condemn the children of unbelief. It is in such cases that His judgment is right and true, also for that reason since His Father, who sent Him, is in and with Him. The two are inseparably connected and united, even though Christ is now appearing in the lowliness and humility of His human nature.

An appeal to the Law of the Jews: V. 17. **It is also written in your Law that the testimony of two men is true.** V. 18. **I am one that bear witness of Myself, and the Father that sent Me beareth witness of Me.** V. 19. **Then said they unto Him, Where is Thy Father? Jesus answered, Ye neither know Me nor My Father; if ye had known Me, ye should have known My Father also.** V. 20. **These words spake Jesus in the treasury, as He taught in the Temple; and no man laid hands on Him, for His hour was not yet come.** The Jews questioned the validity of Christ's testimony concerning Himself. But Jesus would have them consider that their own Law, upon which they were always harping, came to His assistance. If the testimony of two witnesses to a certain matter agreed, the Law held the testimony to be valid, Deut. 17, 6; 19, 15. Now the Lord applies the passage to Himself. He Himself is His own first witness, and His second witness is the Father, of whom Jesus repeats that He has sent Him. Christ's own consciousness and the power of God proclaiming itself in and through Him fully sufficed for the demands of the Law respecting exact testimony. But the Jews were still skeptical. They maintain that it is all very well for Him to allege that His Father is His second witness, and to hint at His supernatural existence, but the question is: Where is He? The Jews wanted some special manifestation and proof that God acknowledged Jesus as His Son, cp. chap. 12, 28. Jesus does not give them a direct answer. They ought to have known whom He meant when He spoke of His Father and been reminded of the many miracles which established His relation to God beyond a doubt. Theirs was a wilful, malignant ignorance. The knowledge and acceptance of God and His whereabouts depends upon the knowledge and acceptance of Jesus. They professed to know this man Jesus who was bearing witness before them, but had they really known Him, they would necessarily have known the Father with whom He was inseparably connected. Belief in and knowledge of Jesus implies knowledge of and belief in the Father. When unbelievers speak of God, of the dispensations of Providence, etc., they do not understand and realize of what they are speaking. The words are hollow, meaningless phrases in their mouths. Only the true believers, that are united with Christ by the bonds of true faith, can have a true knowledge and idea of God. In Christ the Father is revealed. This saying of the Lord, which again seemed boastful to the Jews, so angered them that they were ready to apprehend Him, as He sat there in the Court of the Women, in the section where the treasury chests were placed. But no one could touch Him, since the hour which was set in the counsel of God was not yet come. Though all the enemies of Christ combine in a deliberate effort to harm the Gospel and to hinder its proclamation, they are powerless before His almighty will.

Christ's going to the Father: V. 21. **Then said Jesus again unto them, I go My way, and ye shall seek Me, and shall die in your sins; whither I go, ye cannot come.** V. 22. **Then said the Jews, Will He kill Himself? because He saith, Whither I go, ye cannot come.** V. 23. **And He said unto them, Ye are from beneath; I am from above: ye**

44) Luther, 8. 142.

are of this world; I am not of this world. V. 24. I said therefore unto you that ye shall die in your sins; for if ye believe not that I am He, ye shall die in your sins. V. 25. Then said they unto Him, Who art Thou? And Jesus saith unto them, Even the same that I said unto you from the beginning. V. 26. I have many things to say and to judge of you; but He that sent Me is true; and I speak to the world those things which I have heard of Him. V. 27. They understood not that He spake to them of the Father. Jesus did not permit Himself to be disconcerted or in any way influenced by the enmity which was manifested in their bearing nor by the angry thoughts of their hearts, but continued His testimony, in the effort to make clear to them what the relation between Him and His Father implied. It was necessary for Him to speak with severity, because of the hardness of their hearts, but the Savior's sympathy and mercy is evident in every sentence. Their time of grace was the present time, now, while He was in their midst. Now was the time to accept Him as the Messiah of the world. Later, when their time of grace will have come to an end, then they will search and look for Him, then they will frantically comb the country for the Messiah whom they have rejected. But it will be too late, and all their false Messiahs will not be able to bring them either temporal or spiritual salvation. They will therefore bring the judgment upon themselves that they will die in their sins. Their unbelief, the sin of sins, having rejected the Redeemer, all regrets would be too late; condemnation would come upon them entirely by their own fault. This fact finds its full application also to-day, when thousands and millions are fooling and frittering away their time of grace. The unbelievers cannot enter into heaven, the place of bliss, they cannot become partakers of eternal happiness. The only way, the only method, the only means of getting to heaven is Christ; he that does not accept Him is lost. The Jews were again hurt to the quick by this plain statement of the Lord. And they tried to vent their spite in mockery. Their insinuation that He contemplated suicide was a most malicious blasphemy, showing the meanness and carnal-mindedness of their hearts. Cp. chap. 7, 35. The sustained loftiness of His thoughts contrasted all the more strongly with the sordidness of their usual line of contemplation. But Jesus disregarded the sneering interruption and pointed out to them what constituted the real cause of separation between Him and them. They were from beneath, from below, from this world, in the worst sense of the term. Their thoughts were wrapped up in the blind sinfulness of this world, wherefore they had no eyes for, and no understanding of, the matters which concerned heaven and eternity with Christ. Christ, being from above, with divine ideas and thoughts, was separated from them by a wide gulf. That the Jews did not believe in Christ could be explained only by their natural blindness and enmity toward God. Their origin and their associations were both brought out in their manner of thinking and acting. They are concerned with the matters of this world; Christ's mind and thought is centered in the world to come. And now the Lord tells them why they would die in their sins, why their sins would prove the factor of their own condemnation. It is due to the fact that they do not and will not believe. For that is the one condition for obtaining salvation, to believe that it is Jesus, and Jesus only, in whom there is salvation. That is the object which brought Him down from heaven, and that is the great gift which He has earned for all men, the gift which can be secured by faith only. This statement of the Lord did not yet make things clear to the Jews; in a measure, it added to their bewilderment, since they could not associate this simple Nazarene with supernatural gifts. In their blindness they ask: Who art Thou? And Jesus told them: What I have told you from the beginning and always, that I am. He is above all, from the beginning, the Word which He is speaking to them; He is identified with that Word; that is His essence and the description of His person and office: the Word of God Incarnate. As such He still has many things to say to them; the revelations which He could give them concerning the Father and the Father's will are so great and wonderful that the subject could never be exhausted. And He would also be obliged to judge, to condemn them because they refuse to believe on Him. They should know, however, in spite of their refusal to believe, that the Father who sent Him is true; there is no falseness, no deceitfulness in Him. There are certain matters which the Father, that sent Jesus, has given Him to say to the world, and this will He carries out. Even now the Jews did not understand the Lord; their understanding was darkened; they did not identify "Him that sent Me" with "the Father." Note: By the reconciliation which Christ earned through His atonement the sins are no longer imputed to him that accepts this redemption; to him that refuses to believe, they remain imputed, not because the atonement has not been made, but because it is not accepted. Mark also, in the entire passage, the stately quiet of Jesus, while His words roll from His lips like the tolling of the bell of doom. The unbelievers load a terrible responsibility upon themselves in rejecting their Savior.

The distinguishing sign: V. 28. **Then said Jesus unto them, When ye have lifted up the Son of Man, then shall ye know that I am He, and that I do nothing of Myself; but as My Father hath taught Me, I speak these things. V. 29. And He that sent Me is with Me; the Father hath not left Me alone; for I do always those things that please Him. V. 30. As He spake these**

words, many believed on Him. In spite of all the enmity and the lack of understanding, the Lord continues to proclaim His message concerning Himself and His office in the world. He points forward to the great culmination of His labors in the world. The time would come that they would raise up the Son of Man, nail Him to the cross. Through this death He would enter into the glory of His Father. This fact would become a distinguishing mark. He that believes on the crucified Christ has the necessary spiritual understanding of the Gospel and its meaning. They that reject the crucified Christ will find that He will become their Judge. To them He will be revealed in the majesty of His divine power, and they will understand when it is too late that He did nothing in His labors on earth on His own initiative, by arrogant presumption, but that He had spoken only what the Father had taught Him to say. For the union between the two persons of the Godhead is so intimate that all their great undertakings for the salvation of mankind are done together. For although He has been sent out by the Father, yet the Father is with Him; there is a distinction of persons, but one divine essence. He is true to the purpose of the Father, to the divine will for the salvation of the world; and therefore His conduct pleases the Father at all times, there is perfect sympathy and correspondence between them. Now finally some of the divine truths penetrated into the hearts and minds of some of the hearers, and many were won for Christ. His Word, whenever and wherever it is preached, will always have some effect and success, on account of its inherent power.

The True Liberty of the Gospel.

John 8, 31—59.

Bondage and liberty: V. 31. **Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on Him, If ye continue in My Word, then are ye My disciples indeed;** v. 32. **and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.** V. 33. **They answered Him, We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man; how sayest Thou, Ye shall be made free?** Many of the Jews had indeed come to faith, but their minds were still held in the bondage of a carnal understanding. Their idea of discipleship was that of an external adherence to Christ, of professing allegiance to Him as their Leader. They were caught in the meshes of the same delusion which to this day holds the minds of so many so-called Christians captive. The continuing or remaining in the Word of Christ is the characteristic of the true disciples of Christ, the adhering strictly to the Word which He has left for our instruction in the gospels and epistles. There we find Jesus revealed, and through the understanding of Jesus as the Christ we have true knowledge, the knowledge of the truth; and that knowledge is the only factor which will give us true liberty. Without Christ, all men are servants, slaves of sin, Rom. 6, 17—20. But in Christ there is deliverance from sin, true freedom. Only those men are truly free that have accepted the salvation of Jesus; only they have a will which is interested in good works and able to perform them. That is the wonderful liberty of the Christian of which Luther wrote in such powerful words. But the Jews thought the Lord spoke of the liberty of the body from the tyranny of an earthly despot. They resented the inference as though they had ever been in bondage: Children of Abraham we are, and to no man have we ever been in bondage, in slavery. They forgot, for the moment, that they were subject to the Romans; they forgot also that their fathers had been in the power of the Egyptian, Babylonian, Syrian, and Roman conquerors. Since Abraham had received the promise of a descendant that should rule all nations, the Jews proudly called themselves children of kings. They resented even the idea as though they needed to be emancipated, to be set free. This answer of the Jews shows that they had quickly extinguished the small flame of faith which had been kindled in their hearts. Their Jewish pride would not accept such a statement from Jesus. The pride of the human heart has driven many a person away from the church to which he professed allegiance, because he resented the plain talk of the Bible regarding the depravity of the human heart.

True liberty: V. 34. **Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin.** V. 35. **And the servant abideth not in the house forever; but the Son abideth ever.** V. 36. **If the Son, therefore, shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.** V. 37. **I know that ye are Abraham's seed; but ye seek to kill Me because My Word hath no place in you.** V. 38. **I speak that which I have seen with My Father; and ye do that which ye have seen with your father.** In a very solemn manner, Jesus here proceeds to explain His statement regarding slavery or bondage. Every doer of sin is a slave of sin. He that commits a sin thereby places himself in its power, is bound and held captive absolutely. And therefore these Jews are servants, slaves, in the spiritual sense. But such a slave has no part and right in the house, he has only duties to perform; he is not his own master and cannot speak of freedom. The servants of sin may now be outward members of the Kingdom, of the Church, but they will in the end be obliged to leave, they will be thrust out from the place where they have usurped the rights of children. It is only the Son of God that is able to bring freedom, emancipation from sin and its service. He has earned freedom from sin for all men by paying the price, the redemption for their sin, His holy blood. That is the only true freedom, which the Son has thus earned and is offering to the whole world, which He wants also these

Jews to accept. Jesus was very well aware that they were descendants of Abraham according to the flesh, that they could trace their ancestry back to the great patriarch. But they had little of their ancestor's manner in them, for they were even now seeking to kill Him, because His Word would not enter into their hearts and minds. The unbelievers are filled with spiteful anger against the true believers, but incidentally shut up their hearts tightly against every form of Gospel influence. While Jesus was making it a practise to speak what He had seen in the bosom of His Father from eternity, all the wonderful things which pertained to the salvation of mankind, the Jews were getting ready and setting their hearts to do what they learned from him who was their father in truth, in a spiritual sense, the devil. They were acting in a perfectly consistent manner. It was a bit of impressive irony which should have opened the eyes of the Jews.

The difference between earthly and spiritual parenthood: V. 39. **They answered and said unto Him, Abraham is our father. Jesus saith unto them, If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham.** V. 40. **But now ye seek to kill Me, a man that hath told you the truth, which I have heard of God; this did not Abraham.** V. 41. **Ye do the deeds of your father. Then said they to Him, We be not born of fornication; we have one Father, even God.** Whether the Jews would not or could not understand the words of Jesus is not apparent. But they sullenly, doggedly repeat their statement that Abraham was their father, their ancestor, assuming that this fact must cover a multitude of defections. To this Jesus objects by saying that they must do the works of Abraham, if they are children of Abraham in truth, that is, in the spiritual sense. They have none of the characteristics, none of the spiritual nature of Abraham, else they would show this nature in such deeds as would be in conformity with the spirit of Abraham. In seeking to kill Jesus, against whom they could bring no real charge, they showed a decided difference from Abraham. The Jews now began to notice that He was ascribing a different parentage to them and became highly incensed. They were not born of an adulterous union, they protest; they were not guilty of idolatry and the practises that go with idolatry; they belonged to the people of Israel in truth; they believed in one Father, in God Himself, and had nothing in common with idols. Their zeal was commendable, but it did not strike the point under discussion.

The true ancestry of the Jews: V. 42. **Jesus said unto them, If God were your Father, ye would love Me; for I proceeded forth and came from God; neither came I of Myself, but He sent Me.** V. 43. **Why do ye not understand My speech? Even because ye cannot hear My Word.** V. 44. **Ye are of your father, the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own; for he is a liar, and the father of it.** V. 45. **And because I tell you the truth, ye believe Me not.** V. 46. **Which of you convinceth Me of sin? And if I say the truth, why do ye not believe Me?** V. 47. **He that is of God heareth God's words; ye therefore hear them not because ye are not of God.** The Jews had vehemently repudiated the idea of their being idolaters and had just as emphatically insisted that they were children of God, that they belonged to God's house as children. But Jesus now shows that God cannot be their Father. For if that relationship obtained, then it would follow without fail that they would love Him, since He proceeded forth from eternity from the Father. He did not come on a mission of His own scheming and devising, but God has sent Him. If they were really children of God, they would love Him, for brothers must feel brotherly love toward one another. He that does not love Christ has no part in God. And not only the fact that they refused to welcome Him was an unmistakable argument against their being God's children, but also the fact that His speech was incomprehensible to them, that they could not understand the commonest things concerning the Father which He told them. The ears of their mind, of their understanding, were closed. Even the substance of His words was foreign to them; His language, His mode of speech, everything was strange and unfamiliar to them. For that reason they also refused to give ear to His preaching. Unbelief has its cause and reason in not wanting to accept Jesus and His doctrine. And having thus shown in two points that the Jews cannot possibly be children of God, Jesus no longer minces words, but tells them that according to their spiritual nature they are children of the devil and exhibit the devil's characteristics. They have hardened their own hearts, and therefore the judgment of this hardening is upon them. They want to perform, they find their greatest delight in performing, the desires of their father, the devil. Note: The distinction should be observed between servants of the devil and children of the devil. All men, as the result of inherited sin, are servants of sin and of the devil, because they are in the power of the devil and are forced to do his bidding. But children of the devil are such people as deliberately invite the devil to take possession of their heart and mind. They are truly one with the devil, all their thinking and speaking is specifically devilish. He that rejects Christ, the Savior, and consistently refuses to accept His Word, is doubly a child of the devil. Wherein the devil delights, as things that are opposed to the good and gracious will of God, therein they also find their

delight. They are not betrayed into this condition, but they have deliberately embraced that which is wrong. And the traits of their spiritual father the Jews now exhibit especially in two ways. The devil is a murderer and a liar from the beginning. His great delight is to destroy man, the image of God, according to body and soul. This idea has actuated him from the beginning; it has found its expression in every murder since the time of Cain. And he has no idea of the truth, he does not adhere to it nor live in it. The domain of lies, of deliberate, malignant, malicious falsehoods, is his special province. He himself is a liar and the father of all liars. Note: There is a splendidly consoling thought in the words of Christ that the devil is a liar. If he then tries to make a Christian believe that his sins cannot be forgiven, the latter has a weapon in this saying of Christ wherewith he can conquer the devil and quiet his doubting heart. Now the Jews partook of the nature of the devil, their spiritual father, in both these traits. In the first place, they would not believe Christ, although He told them the truth. And in the second place, they had a murderous hatred of Him in their hearts. Not one of them could substantiate a single charge against Him. But if they must confess their failure in this respect, they must thereby concede His infallibility. What He therefore speaks, is the truth. So utterly irrational and bigoted were the Jews that they might have believed Him had He spoken falsehood, for it was their nature to believe falsehood. The Lord plainly tells them that He has believers and always will have believers among such as have a different moral and spiritual descent. A person that is truly born of God, regenerated according to God's loving counsel, has the manner and nature of God in himself, he understands the words of God as spoken by Jesus and accepts them. In open contrast to this the fact that they do not and will not hear God's words proves that they are not His children, that they have nothing in common with Him. It is a truth which should be repeated in our days in the case of every person that refuses to hear and learn the Word of God according to the will of God.

The Jews take refuge in abuse: V. 48. **Then answered the Jews and said unto Him, Say we not well that Thou art a Samaritan and hast a devil?** V. 49. **Jesus answered, I have not a devil; but I honor My Father, and ye do dishonor Me.** V. 50. **And I seek not Mine own glory; there is One that seeketh and judgeth.** V. 51. **Verily, verily, I say unto you, If a man keep My saying, he shall never see death.** The frank argument of Jesus struck deeply, it cut the proud Jews to the quick. And they could not gainsay His words, their conscience was forced to admit their truth. And so they took recourse to jeering and abuse. They called Him a Samaritan, an adherent of the people that had retained only a part of the truth, whose members were considered heretics by the Jews and therefore believed to be possessed of evil spirits. That is the manner and style of the unbelievers of all times; when they find that they have no arguments against the truth, then they resort to calumny and blasphemy. But Jesus does not permit the manner of the enemies to disturb Him. He most emphatically, but altogether quietly, spurns the charge, declaring that He was honoring His Father in all His works and words. In speaking as He did, He gave all honor to His Father. But the Jews, by their blasphemy, dishonored Him, and therefore also, by implication, His Father. Their foolish manner of acting does not stir Him to resentment, for the idea of seeking and furthering His own glory was absolutely foreign to Him. But from this they should not infer that their abuse of Him was a matter of indifference, which would not find its punishment. There is One above, who is very much concerned about His Son's glory and honor; He seeks it, and He will pass judgment upon those that esteem the abuse of the Lord lightly. The sentence of condemnation which the blasphemers of Christ will bring down upon themselves is terrible beyond human comprehension. The Jews should therefore remember, as Jesus solemnly declares to them, that a man that keeps His saying, that diligently attends to His words, His Gospel, and accepts them for use in His life without remonstrance and unbelief, shall not see death unto all eternity. Temporal death will have no terrors for Him, being merely the gate and entrance to eternal life. Here was the sweetest, the most wonderful Gospel-news, calculated to strengthen and comfort all believers of that and the present time.

The attempt to kill the Lord. V. 52. **Then said the Jews unto Him, Now we know that Thou hast a devil. Abraham is dead, and the prophets; and Thou sayest, If a man keep My saying, he shall never taste of death.** V. 53. **Art Thou greater than our father Abraham, which is dead? and the prophets are dead. Whom makest Thou Thyself?** V. 54. **Jesus answered, If I honor Myself, My honor is nothing; it is My Father that honoreth Me; of whom ye say that He is your God;** v. 55. **yet ye have not known Him. But I know Him; and if I should say, I know Him not, I shall be a liar like unto you; but I know Him, and keep His saying.** V. 56. **Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day; and he saw it and was glad.** V. 57. **Then said the Jews unto Him, Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast Thou seen Abraham?** V. 58. **Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am.** V. 59. **Then took they up stones to cast at Him; but Jesus hid Himself, and went out of the Temple, going through the midst of them, and so passed by.** The saying of Jesus

that the believer in Him was sure of obtaining eternal life was beyond the comprehension of the Jews. And it increased their anger and resentment to note that Jesus ascribed such power to Himself. They concluded rightly that the Lord here claimed to possess supernatural attributes. And so they repeat their slander and blasphemy that He is possessed of an evil spirit. They understood the saying of temporal death, and since they supposed Jesus to be a mere man and surely of smaller importance than Abraham and the prophets, they felt that He was arrogating to Himself powers which were altogether out of His reach. If those men had died, He surely could not speak of granting safety and deliverance from death. Their conclusion was a bit of sound arguing. Jesus did indeed place Himself upon a much higher level than the prophets. But the question of the Jews was impudent in spite of all: What do You expect us to take You for? Their words plainly showed their contempt of Him and of the fact that they believed Him to be extolling Himself at the expense of truth. But Jesus insists that He has His honor from His Father. If He were guilty of exalting Himself at the expense of truth, His glory would suffer at once and come to naught. God never permits an unworthy person to arrogate to himself privileges which properly belong to Him alone. But in this case God Himself was giving evidence on every hand that He stood behind His Son, in His preaching and in His miracles. Now the Jews made the boastful statement that God was their Father. If that were true, then they must be conscious of the fact that God is zealous and jealous of the honor of the Son, whom He has sent. But their proud boast cannot be true, they cannot have a correct idea and knowledge of Him. Their entire life and manner of acting shows that. They have not acquired knowledge of the Father, either by observation or by teaching, but the knowledge of Christ is of such a nature as to exclude all possibility of a mistake as to the essence and qualities of God. He has a direct and essential knowledge of His Father. Were He to deny that He has such a direct knowledge of God, then He would be a liar and on a level with the Jews. But He is the possessor of the right knowledge, out of which grows and follows a glad and joyful keeping of His Word. Note: This close connection between the actual knowledge of God by faith and the doing of His will is indispensable in the Christian life; the keeping of God's Word must follow the acceptance of this Word in faith. And with Jesus this keeping was of a peculiarly wonderful character, since He was carrying out the will of God for the salvation of the world. And now Jesus offers a bit of proof for the fact that He is greater than Abraham. For this patriarch, who was their ancestor according to the flesh, was filled with exultant joy over the fact that he should see the day of Christ. The wonderful promises which were given him with regard to the Messiah filled his heart with joy ineffable. In this way Abraham did see the Lord, His Savior, by faith, and died in happy trust in Him. But this last saying the Jews completely misunderstood. They had the idea that the life of Jesus and that of Abraham on earth had been contemporaneous. Full of indignation they cried out to Him: Fifty years Thou art not yet, and Abraham Thou hast seen! The very idea was preposterous. But Jesus repeats the thought with an unusually strong affirmation, that before Abraham came into being, He was, He is, thus asserting His eternity. Our Savior, the humble and despised Jesus of Nazareth, is the eternal God. That is our comfort, to know that in our redemption the suffering and death of the eternal God is lying in the balance. It is the eternal God that delivered us from eternal damnation. That the eternal God suffered for some hours on the cross, that has taken away the power of hell and damnation. But this was too much for the Jews. They could no longer contain themselves; they picked up stones to put Him to death for what they considered blasphemy. But their murderous intention was not carried out. Jesus did not merely hide Himself, to slip out unobserved, but He made Himself invisible by His almighty power. Through their very midst He went out, unhindered, while His enemies were struck with temporary blindness and vainly endeavored to harm Him. That same almighty Jesus is the Protector of His own at all times, and may well make use of His power in their interest, whenever He deems it necessary. There must be no lack of trust in Him.

Summary. *Jesus gives an evidence of His redeeming love in the case of the woman taken in adultery, proclaims Himself as the Light of the world, tells of His going to the Father, gives a discourse of the true liberty of the Gospel, and escapes from the wrath of the Jews.*

CHAPTER 9.

Healing of the Man That was Born Blind.

John 9, 1—41.

The miracle: V. 1. **And as Jesus passed by, He saw a man which was blind from his birth.** V. 2. **And His disciples asked Him, saying, Master, who did sin, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?** V. 3. **Jesus answered, Neither hath this man sinned nor his parents, but that the works of God should be made manifest in him.** V. 4. **I must work the works of Him that sent Me while it is day; the night cometh when no man can work.** V. 5. **As long as I am in the world, I am**

the Light of the world. V. 6. When He had thus spoken, He spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle, and He anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay, v. 7. **and said unto him, Go, wash in the pool of Siloam (which is by interpretation, Sent). He went his way therefore and washed, and came seeing.** This story is simply the continuation of the previous narrative, for the events here told occurred as Jesus passed along, probably out of the Temple, near whose gates many beggars were wont to assemble. It so happened that His eye rested upon a blind man. It is a peculiarity of God's providence that He often manifests His power in little incidents which seem to us chance happenings. The man that drew the attention of Jesus had been blind from his birth. The disciples, who also noticed the poor unfortunate man, voiced the opinion of the general public when they asked Jesus whether his affliction was due to some sin which he himself had committed or to some fault of his parents. Their question gives Jesus an opportunity to repudiate the popular belief as though each particular sickness or sorrow is traceable to some particular sin. It is true in general, of course, that sin has been followed by all manner of physical ailments and weaknesses, which are in themselves only forerunners of death, the wages of sin. It is true, also, that certain sins, especially those of impurity, will bring direct punishment to the body. But to scent exceptional transgression whenever any severe misfortune or sickness strikes an individual or a family, is almost invariably an injustice and savors of the judging and condemning against which the Lord warns. Cp. Luke 13, 1—5. Jesus therefore taught His disciples the truth with regard to this man and all other unfortunate sick people. In this special case, for instance, the work of God, His power and might, should become manifest. And the Lord added that He, or, according to some manuscripts, we, His followers, together with Him, are under obligation to work, to carry out the works of Him that sent Christ into the world. There is no false understanding as to the nature and scope of the work and office which He must perform in the world, nor is there the slightest hesitation as to attacking the work with all the willingness of a heart bound up in God's will. The present time is the day of Christ; now is the time of grace; now He must be about His own and His Father's business. That same spirit must live in the followers of Christ, that must characterize all their efforts for the spread of the Kingdom and all their work in the interest of the kingdom of God. Every bit of time, every ounce of strength should be thrown into this most important work. For soon the night of death will come, and that will definitely put a stop to all work with and for the Lord. As for Himself, Jesus states that His choice and its obligation were clear to Him; as long as He is in the world, His office of being the Light of the world must not cease. That work He had explained at length to the Jews, and the trend of the conversation here recalled the explanation. The reference would tend to increase the emphasis of His willingness to work for the benefit and salvation of the world. And now Jesus proceeded deliberately to perform the miracle of healing the blind man, who had undoubtedly heard every word of the conversation, with the sweetness of its Gospel-message. He formed a paste by moistening a little clay with spittle from His mouth, placed it upon the eyes of the blind man, and then sent him down to the pool Siloam to wash. The pool Siloah, or Siloam, was the one from which the water was taken on the day of the great Hosannah, the last day of the Feast of Tabernacles, whose pouring out symbolized the sending of the Spirit. Jesus in this case arranged the circumstantial details at such unusual length in order to emphasize that the healing was performed by Him. The blind man, whose faith in Jesus had meanwhile been firmly grounded, did not hesitate for a moment to carry out the orders of Christ. He went away and washed himself and returned seeing.

The excitement caused by the miracle: V. 8. **The neighbors, therefore, and they which before had seen him that he was blind, said, Is not this he that sat and begged?** V. 9. **Some said, This is he; others said, He is like him; but he said, I am he.** V. 10. **Therefore said they unto him, How were thine eyes opened?** V. 11. **He answered and said, A man that is called Jesus made clay, and anointed mine eyes, and said unto me, Go to the pool of Siloam and wash; and I went and washed, and I received sight.** V. 12. **Then said they unto him, Where is He? He said, I know not.** The blind man had returned to the city, to his home. Jesus meanwhile continued His way elsewhere. The people of the neighborhood, seeing the former blind man walking about with the manifest ability to use the sense of sight, were filled with the greatest surprise. Others there were that were ready to identify him as the man that had formerly plied his vocation as beggar. The miracle was so singular that they all were somewhat doubtful as to his identity, some saying that it was he, others, that he only resembled him. But the former blind man settled the discussion by frankly maintaining that he was one and the same. Note how minute, distinct, and true to life the narration flows along. The neighbors and all that had come together now eagerly pressed him with questions as to the manner in which he had received his sight. And he related it truthfully. He had never seen Jesus, but he had heard His name. He knew that Jesus put some kind of paste on his dead eyes, which he afterwards found to be clay; how this had been made he could not tell, because

he had not seen. He knew that by following directions he had been given his sight, and he was still filled with the wonder of it all. Upon the further question as to the whereabouts of his benefactor, the former blind man can truthfully say only that he does not know. Though Jesus was well known in some parts of Palestine at that time, there were many people that did not yet know Him. They may have heard of Him in a vague way as the great Prophet and Healer, but His name and His person were not well known in Jerusalem.

The inquiry of the Pharisees: V. 13. **They brought to the Pharisees him that aforetime was blind.** V. 14. **And it was the Sabbath-day when Jesus made the clay and opened his eyes.** V. 15. **Then again the Pharisees also asked him how he had received his sight. He said unto them, He put clay upon mine eyes, and I washed, and do see.** V. 16. **Therefore said some of the Pharisees, This Man is not of God because He keepeth not the Sabbath-day. Others said, How can a man that is a sinner do such miracles? And there was a division among them.** V. 17. **They say unto the blind man again, What sayest thou of Him that He hath opened thine eyes? He said, He is a prophet.** The matter was of such importance that the people deemed it their duty to bring the man to the rulers of the people, among whom the Pharisees were the most prominent. To these sticklers for external forms and observances the most important point was of course this, that the healing had been done on a Sabbath. The mixing of the clay, in their estimation, was the work of a mason, and the order to the man to go and wash himself an unnecessary piece of work. So the Pharisees promptly took the man and cross-questioned him as to how he had received his sight. The man's testimony was not to be shaken. He gave them the same account which he had given the neighbors. And the hypocrites immediately pounced upon the fact that the healing had been done on the Sabbath; that was the charge against the Healer. Jesus had, as it seems, purposely performed the miracle on the Sabbath, in order to give offense to the Pharisees. He gave these malicious people, that refused to accept the truth, reasons to become ever more offended and thus to fulfil the measure of their transgressions. That is the terrible punishment of unbelief, the self-hardening of the heart. But some of the members of the Sanhedrin, whose spiritual insight had not been altogether lost, made the hesitating remark: How can a sinner do such signs? They felt that God would not permit an open transgressor of His holy Law to go unpunished, much less give to him such unusual powers to perform miracles. The result of the entire discussion was that there was a division in the council, they could not come to an agreement in their judgment of the case. For a digression, they asked the former blind man what he thought of his benefactor. He did not hesitate for a moment to confess Christ, whom he had never seen, as a great prophet sent by God, thus ascribing his healing to God. The enemies of Christ are always on the lookout for some way of discrediting the miracles of the Gospel, but they have no success; the Word of God stands too secure.

The consultation with the parents: V. 18. **But the Jews did not believe concerning him that he had been blind and received his sight, until they called the parents of him that had received his sight.** V. 19. **And they asked them, saying, Is this your son, who, ye say, was born blind? How, then, doth he now see?** V. 20. **His parents answered them and said, We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind;** v. 21. **but by what means he now seeth we know not, or who hath opened his eyes we know not. He is of age; ask him; he shall speak for himself.** V. 22. **These words spake his parents because they feared the Jews; for the Jews had agreed already that if any man did confess that He was Christ, he should be put out of the synagog.** V. 23. **Therefore said his parents, He is of age; ask him.** The Jewish rulers, having found the testimony of the former blind man too simple to permit any questioning, now tried to invalidate his statements by expressing doubts as to his former blindness. In an effort to discredit the whole matter, therefore, they called the parents before their tribunal. Mark the procedure of a typical hierarchical government. The parents were asked whether they were sure as to the identity of this man, and also whether they knew in what way he had received his sight. We can very well imagine the scene, the timid old people shrinking back before the overbearing manner of the inquisitors, hardly daring to open their mouth, for fear of saying something that would offend the mighty ones. They could testify as to their son's having been born blind, but they were very careful to remain absolutely neutral, to retain a disinterested attitude as to any possible miracle, for the Jews had threatened all those that would confess Christ or speak in His favor with excommunication. They referred the examiners to the man himself. He was of age, and he was fully able to speak for himself. They did not want to risk excommunication, since that shut them out from practically all intercourse with any but the lowest class of people. And that was the understanding among the members of the Sanhedrin, to put the confessors of Christ out of the Church. "Of excommunication there were three degrees: the first lasted for thirty days; then followed a 'second admonition,' and if impenitent, the culprit was punished for thirty days more; and if still impenitent, he was laid under the *cherem*, or ban, which was of indefi-

nite duration, and which entirely cut him off from intercourse with others. He was treated as if he were a leper. This, to persons as poor as the parents of this beggar, would mean ruin and death." 45) Note: It is a terrible judgment upon unbelief that the unbelievers cannot see the plainest and surest facts which are held before their eyes. The resurrection of Christ, the inerrancy of the Bible, and scores of other facts which have the testimony of the best witnesses in the world on their side are still being questioned by people that claim for themselves fairness. But their blindness is so dense that they can no longer see the light.

A second interview with the former blind man: V. 24. **Then again called they the man that was blind, and said unto him, Give God the praise; we know that this Man is a sinner.** V. 25. **He answered and said, Whether He be a sinner or no, I know not; one thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see.** V. 26. **Then said they to him again, What did He do to thee? How opened He thine eyes?** V. 27. **He answered them, I have told you already, and ye did not hear; wherefore would ye hear it again? Will ye also be His disciples?** V. 28. **Then they reviled him and said, Thou art His disciple; but we are Moses' disciples.** V. 29. **We know that God spake unto Moses; as for this fellow, we know not from whence He is.** The Pharisees were in a quandary. If the facts concerning this miracle were spread abroad, the fame of Christ would grow and be carried out in all directions, and their prestige would receive a severe jolt. Therefore they made another attempt to shake the testimony of the man, but this time in such a way as to make him deny that a miracle had been performed. With a sanctimonious air they admonish him to give glory to God alone by telling the actual truth, and not a piece of fiction invented for the benefit of Jesus. There is almost a bit of threatening in the words: We know that this Man is a sinner. The deduction was that it must have been impossible to perform what the man claimed had been done. But the man doggedly stuck to the truth; he was not concerned about the sinfulness or sinlessness of his benefactor. One thing he knew: Having been blind, he could now see. This same simple faith and dogged perseverance should characterize a Christian's confession of Jesus. If unbelievers try to shake the testimony concerning conversion or regeneration, the simple adhering to that one truth: I know the experience of my own heart and mind; it is not an illusion, but it is the firmest conviction in the world, will often repulse the enemies. In the effort to shake the firmness of this witness, the Jews again asked him about the manner in which his eyes had been opened. It is hardly to be wondered at that the matter was getting on the man's nerves and that he answered them rather tartly. He had told them once, and they had evidently not listened very well; why should he repeat the same testimony over and over again? Their silly effort to inveigle him into some inconsistent statement was a despicable piece of strategy. But the man's taunt as to their wishing to become disciples of Jesus struck them in a tender place. Angrily they reviled him, charging him with being a disciple of that Man. They placed Jesus in the class of outcasts with whom they wanted nothing to do. But so far as they were concerned, they were the disciples of Moses, they piously assert. They were sure, in the case of Moses, that God had spoken with him; but in the case of this Man they have nothing definite to base their opinion on, they do not even know His origin. That was partly wilful ignorance, partly blasphemous malice. They had had plenty of opportunity to get the information they desired, if they had only been willing to follow the directions of Jesus, chap. 7, 17. Note: Unbelievers that attempt to be clever and sarcastic at the same time, throw aspersions upon the virgin birth of Christ, thus also questioning His origin, whereas a simple reading of Scripture would convince them, if they would not consistently resist the Holy Ghost.

The proper conclusion of the former blind man: V. 30. **The man answered and said unto them, Why, herein is a marvelous thing, that ye know not from whence He is, and yet He hath opened mine eyes.** V. 31. **Now we know that God heareth not sinners; but if any man be a worshiper of God, and doeth His will, him He heareth.** V. 32. **Since the world began was it not heard that any man opened the eyes of one that was born blind.** V. 33. **If this Man were not of God, He could do nothing.** Far from making the man dubious and timid in his statements, the method chosen by the Pharisees rather made him firmer in his position toward the Man who had given him the great blessing of sight. The astonishment of the man was well founded. The leaders of the Jews should have known such a wonderful Healer. To hesitate about the origin of one that performed such wonderful cures and manifested such divine power was foolish in his opinion, and he did not hesitate about telling the Jewish leaders that very fact. Certain it was that a sinner could not perform such deeds; God could not be induced to give such power to a person that deliberately transgressed His will. But now the deed was an evidence of the power of God in the Healer. Therefore this man Jesus could not be a sinner, but must be from God. That a miracle of such magnitude should be performed in the world was unheard of. If Jesus, therefore, could perform such miracles, He must be from God. That was the right conclusion, one which com-

45) *Expositor's Greek Testament*, 1, 785.

pletely vanquished the rulers of the Jews. This unlearned man could argue with much more exactness and power than they themselves, because he had the truth on his side. In the same way the simplest Christian, by adhering strictly to the truth of Scriptures, is able to confound the keenest and cleverest unbelievers that make the attempt to take away his faith in his Savior.

Jesus reveals Himself: V. 34. **They answered and said unto him, Thou wast altogether born in sins, and dost thou teach us? And they cast him out.** V. 35. **Jesus heard that they had cast him out; and when He had found him, He said unto him, Dost thou believe on the Son of God?** V. 36. **He answered and said, Who is He, Lord, that I might believe on Him?** V. 37. **And Jesus said unto him, Thou hast both seen Him, and it is He that talketh with thee.** V. 38. **And he said, Lord, I believe. And he worshiped Him.** The former blind man's frankness enraged the Pharisees beyond measure. They now cast the popular belief into his face, telling him that his blindness was due to sin, and reproaching him with his calamity. That is the manner of unbelievers. When they are no longer able to contradict plain facts, they have recourse to vile insinuations and malicious blasphemies. And the Pharisees, in addition to their other insult, cast him out of the room where they had their sessions and took the first steps to put him out of the congregation as well. They wilfully, deliberately closed their eyes against the plain facts that were before their eyes; they denied their reality; they throttled their own conscience. All their actions were a product of hypocrisy of the rankest kind, blasphemy without parallel. Jesus, who had carefully watched the case of the former blind man, soon found out that the Jewish rulers had begun the process of excommunication against him. He therefore took occasion to look him up and reassure him in a most wonderful way. The question of Jesus, whether he believed in the Son of God, was intended to work this faith in the man's heart, for such is the nature of the Word of God at all times. The healed man was a believing Israelite; his faith was placed in the coming Messiah, of whom he knew that He was the Son of God. When he was therefore assured of the identity of the Son of God with the great Healer who was speaking to him, he gladly confessed his faith and showed it by his outward act of devotion, by bending his knee in worshipful prayer; he worshiped Jesus as God. Note: Jesus never loses sight of those in whom He has taken a personal interest. The solicitude of His saving mercy ever attends those that have received His benefits.

The judgment upon wilful blindness: V. 39. **And Jesus said, For judgment I am come into this world, that they which see not might see; and that they which see might be made blind.** V. 40. **And some of the Pharisees which were with Him heard these words, and said unto Him, Are we blind also?** V. 41. **Jesus said unto them, If ye were blind, ye should have no sin; but now ye say, We see; therefore your sin remaineth.** Jesus here makes the application, draws the moral of the events connected with the healing of the blind man. He announces that one function of His office is to carry out judgment, to put a certain separation into execution. Those that were spiritually blind and realized their pitiful condition should receive sight, while those that believed themselves endowed with spiritual and moral sight, while in reality they were hopelessly blind in spiritual matters, should become hopelessly darkened in their own conceit. Cp. Luke 2, 34. Some of the Pharisees, who were, as usual, dogging His footsteps and watching His every word, felt the sting of the last word of the Lord. Sneeringly they ask: Very likely you consider us also blind! And Jesus lost no time in giving them their reply. If their blindness, their natural inability toward all that is good before God, were known to them, then there would be some chance of healing them of their blindness. But so long as they do not realize their pitiful condition, so long as they do not know and will not acknowledge their own perversity and darkness in spiritual matters, their sin remains, they are left in the condemnation of their blindness, with the future damnation which it involves. The Pharisees rejected the Word of Christ, which alone is able to give light to the blind. And therefore they, and all that follow their foolish example, are struck by the judgment of God, according to which His gracious search for them is finally abandoned, and they are left to the fate which they have deliberately preferred to the mercy of the Savior. So the unbelievers are left to their self-chosen fate, the grace of God is withdrawn from them, and the Word of mercy is still preached in their presence, in order that they may take still greater offense and become hardened to their own destruction.46)

Summary. *Christ heals a man that was born blind, and teaches the Jewish rulers, who try their best to spoil the effect of the miracle, that He, the Light of the blind, both internally and externally, has come to give sight to the blind and to take away the sight of those that boast their spiritual knowledge.*

46) Luther, 12, 1302—1313.

CHAPTER 10.

Jesus the Good Shepherd. John 10, 1—21.

The parable of the sheepfold: V. 1. **Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber.** V. 2. **But he that entereth in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep.** V. 3. **To him the porter openeth; and the sheep hear his voice; and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out.** V. 4. **And when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him; for they know his voice.** V. 5. **And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him; for they know not the voice of strangers.** V. 6. **This parable spake Jesus unto them; but they understood not what things they were which He spake unto them.** This parable was also spoken in the Temple, shortly after Jesus had found the man that had been blind and had uttered the ominous words to the Pharisees concerning spiritual blindness. He here refers to a sheepfold, to one of the Oriental pens, or corrals, for sheep. This was a yard with a high stone wall to keep out wild animals as well as other intruders. There was a gate or door which was guarded by a porter. Jesus now states that any person that did not choose the gate to enter into the corral, but sought some other way into the interior, by that very token became evident as a thief, whose intention is to steal quietly, or even a robber, who would not hesitate to use violence. The shepherd is not in need of such schemes and stratagems. He comes to the gate of the corral openly, and the door-guard will open the door for him, for he knows the shepherd and his intentions. And when the heavy gate has been unbarred, the shepherd need but raise his voice in the call which is so well known to the sheep, when they will respond at once. He has names for each one of the sheep entrusted to him, and they can distinguish the call. If there should be several herds in the corral over night, the sheep of each shepherd will still respond only to the voice of their own shepherd. And when all the sheep that belong to his own herd have been put out of the corral, they will follow their shepherd as he leads the way, the shepherd walking in front as is still the custom in the East. They follow his voice, not his clothes nor his dog, as has been ascertained by actual tests. The sheep have such a knowledge of the kind care of the shepherd, of his mild and gentle way of leading and guiding them, that they have full confidence in him. But the sheep fear and flee from a stranger, since his voice is not known to them: they have not learned to trust him as they do their own shepherd. This parable is one of Christ's most beautiful stories in its completeness and in the detailed correctness of the picture, and the application of the parable was sufficiently obvious. But, as usual, the Jews had no idea of the meaning and of the lesson which the Lord intended to convey.

The sheepfold is the Church of God of all times. The sheep are the members of the kingdom of God, the believers of both the Old and New Testaments that put their trust in the Word of their redemption through the work of the Messiah. But the men that were to be their shepherds, their leaders, have from olden times been divided into two classes. There are such as come to the door openly, that have the call and the duty to take care of the souls entrusted to them, and that carry out their difficult calling in the proper manner, with all faithfulness. For they are assistants of the great Shepherd, Jesus Christ, and it is His voice that calls through them. The sheep thus hear the voice of Jesus in the voice of the true pastors, and this they recognize and know perfectly, this they heed gladly. And if they are truly His sheep, they will pay no attention to the call of such as try to imitate the voice of the true Shepherd, but will fear them and flee from them. "For as He has said of His office which He carries on through His Word, thus He also says of His sheep, how they behave in His kingdom, namely, when the door is opened to Him, they at once hear His voice and learn to know it well, for it is a truly comforting, cheering voice, by which they, delivered from terror and fear, come to the liberty that they may expect all mercy and comfort of God in Christ. And when they have once accepted this Shepherd, they adhere to Him alone with all confidence and hear the teaching of none other." 47) The spiritual hearing of the true sheep of Christ, of the believers, soon becomes so keen that they will distinguish at once between true and false teaching, and they will fear and shun the voice of strangers. They will be enabled to judge doctrine correctly, without any arbitrary commands of a self-constituted hierarchy. "The other doctrine is that all Christians have power and right to judge all doctrine and to separate themselves from false teachers and bishops and not to obey them. For here hearest thou that Christ says of His sheep: . . . A stranger will they not follow. . . . For that they can judge such things, of that they have this rule which is stated in this word of Christ, that all who do not preach Christ are thieves and murderers. With this statement the judgment is established that there is need of no further knowledge but to be known of Christ, and that they owe it to Him to follow this judgment and therefore to flee and to shun all such, no matter who, how great, and how many they are." 48) These false

47) Luther, 11, 1130.
48) Luther, 11, 1134.

shepherds are characterized as such that climb into the corral some other way except through the door. False teachers, that have no call from Christ, whose false doctrine has no right to exist, will not come with the pure Gospel and with a call of which they can prove its divine origin, but will make use of schemes and stratagems to deceive the sheep and inveigle them into listening to them. "Now the Gospel is so tender and precious, it cannot endure any addition or extra doctrines. The spiritual doctrines of getting to heaven with fasting, prayer, and other similar works, they in themselves are side-paths which the Gospel will not suffer; but the opponents want them, therefore they are thieves and murderers, for they outrage consciences and slay and murder the sheep. . . . Thus such a path is murder and death." 49) All false teachers are thieves and robbers in the sense of Scriptures, and their presence is a constant menace to the Church of God. "But they are called thieves for this reason, since they steal in secretly, and come with fair speeches, as St. Paul says, Rom. 16, 18, with a great show, and also with true sheep's clothing, pretend to have special faithfulness and love for the souls, but incidentally have that mark, whereby Christ teaches to distinguish them, that they do not go in at the door, but climb up some other way, that is, as He Himself explains, come before Him and without Him, do not point and refer to Christ as the only Shepherd and Savior." 50)

Jesus the Door to the sheepfold: V. 7. **Then said Jesus unto them again, Verily, verily, I say unto you, I am the Door of the sheep.** V. 8. **All that ever came before Me are thieves and robbers; but the sheep did not hear them.** V. 9. **I am the Door; by Me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture.** V. 10. **The thief cometh not but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy; I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.** Jesus makes an application of His parable for the sake of His hearers. In the sheepfold of His Church He is the Door. Only through Him, by reference to Him and His work of salvation, shall any man have access to the sheep, only through Him can the sheep find access to the fold. By faith in Him admittance to the fold is gained; it is the only way in which this wonderful result may be obtained. All real pastors will preach only of this one Door, of this one Way to heaven, through faith in Jesus and the redemption through His blood. There were such among the ruling party of the Jews at that time, and had been even before this, as had arrogated to themselves the function of bringing people into communion with God and into heaven in a different manner, unlike the prophets of old that had always pointed forward to Jesus only. But all those that claimed to be what Christ was in truth, that promised to give to men the certainty of salvation, were thieves and robbers; they came without His authority. Luckily, the real sheep, the true people of God among the children of Israel, had given no heed to their words. For Christ is the Door; through Him if a person enter, and through none else, he will be rendered safe. The only way of salvation leads through Christ; He Himself is that Way, and every man that knows Jesus as such may enter into the fold of the Church and go out on the pasture of the Gospel, and always have fulness and plenty, the mercy and goodness of the Lord, Ps. 72, 16. Three great blessings fall to the lot of those that accept Jesus as their Savior. They have deliverance from dangers, from all enemies; they are safe in the Master's fold. They have liberty, the glorious liberty of the children of God, the right to go out and in; they are slaves neither of sin nor of the Law. And they have sustenance; the riches of God's bounty are poured out upon them anew every day in the Gospel. That is the great contrast between Christ and all those that come as thieves. The thief, and especially the thief in spiritual matters, comes for the purpose of taking away, of destroying life. That is the only object he can have according to his nature. But Jesus has come for the purpose of giving life, true, lasting, eternal life, and not in small measure, but in a fulness far exceeding all needs. Every Christian receives the full measure of everlasting life with all the glories and satisfying beauties that are included therein. Here is an offering of sustaining comfort which is without equal in all religions without Christ, of which no unbeliever can have the faintest conception.

Jesus the Good Shepherd: V. 11. **I am the Good Shepherd; the Good Shepherd giveth His life for the sheep.** V. 12. **But he that is an hireling, and not the Shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth; and the wolf catcheth them, and scattereth the sheep.** V. 13. **The hireling fleeth, because he is an hireling, and careth not for the sheep.** V. 14. **I am the Good Shepherd, and know My sheep, and am known of Mine.** V. 15. **As the Father knoweth Me, even so know I the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep.** V. 16. **And other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they shall hear My voice; and there shall be one fold and one Shepherd.** Jesus here applies the parable in still another way, from another view-point. He calls Himself the Good Shepherd, with emphasis, as the only one that may bear this name with full justice. In this sense the name is applicable to Christ alone; He is the one most excellent Shepherd of the spiritual sheep. The first feature which distinguishes

49) Luther, 11, 1118.
50) Luther, 11, 1125. 1126.

Him as the true Shepherd of souls is this, that He gives His life, His own soul, as a ransom, as the one complete sacrifice, for the guilt of all sinners, who have earned eternal damnation. He became their Substitute; He took upon Himself their transgressions and died in their stead. Thus the guilty, the sinners, were delivered from sin and destruction. In this respect Jesus incidentally is an example for all those that bear the name pastor as His assistants in the great work. For that purpose He also places Himself in deliberate contrast to the hirelings, the false teachers, the Pharisees. Such hirelings, whose sole concern is the money and the desire to take their ease in Zion, have no interest in the souls of men entrusted to their care. They are strictly mercenary and will work only so long as their lives and well-being seem to be safe. At the first sign of the wolf, at the first indication of real danger, of probable persecution, suffering, and even martyrdom, they turn in precipitate flight. The result is the dispersion and the murder of the sheep on the part of the enemies. But the hireling does not care; he has no worry, no anxiety for, no interest in, the sheep. "He that will be a preacher, let him love the work with all his heart, that he seek only God's honor and the welfare of his neighbor. If he does not seek God's glory and his neighbor's salvation only, but thinks, in such office, of his benefit and detriment, there you need not think that he will last. Either he will flee shamefully and desert the sheep, or he will keep silence and let the sheep go without pasture, that is, without the Word. Those are hirelings that preach for their own benefit, are covetous, and do not want to be satisfied with that which God gives them daily as an alms. For we preachers should not desire more from our office than enough and to spare. Those that want more are hirelings that do not care for the herd; whereas a pious preacher will give up everything on that account, even his body and life." 51) The second feature that distinguishes Jesus as the Good Shepherd, in contrast to all others, is the fact of the intimate acquaintance and knowledge between Him and His sheep. Just as Jesus knows them that are His, according to body, mind, and heart, so the believers know Jesus; their heart, their mind and will, is centered in Jesus, rests in Jesus. The expression fitly pictures the intimate, cordial relation and communion of love that obtains between Christ and His true disciples. This intimacy and communion is as close and embracing as that which exists between Father and Son. Their hearts and minds are open to each other; there is a mutual interchange of thoughts and ideas, all guided by a wonderful love. Thus it is between Christ and the believers. It is due to Christ's knowledge of the Father and His will that Jesus declares that He will lay down His life for the sheep. The ransom is paid for the sins of the whole world, but the believers alone take advantage of the mercy of the Savior, they alone obtain the grace of the Father. And Christ has other sheep, which are not of this fold; He shall gain believers in Him also from the members of other nations outside of the Jewish. For the Father has given a great number to Him, out of every nation in the world; they are His by the Father's design and gift. Christ here declares that His voice, in the Word of the Gospel, would go out unto the people of other descent and tongue than the Jews. It is the obligation of the divine will resting upon Him which is urging Him to gain also these for the Gospel. And they would listen, they would obey His voice in the Gospel, and the final result would be one flock, composed of all such as have accepted salvation through the blood of Christ, and one Shepherd, the Son of God Himself. "But nothing is said of unity of organization. There may be various folds, though one flock." 52) The dreams of unionism find no support in this passage. The "holy Christian Church, the communion of saints," has been gathered in the world ever since the first proclamation of the Gospel, and all the true believers in Christ form the great invisible Church. But there is not a word here of uniting visible church organizations into one great, powerful body.

The end of the discourse and its effect: V. 17. **Therefore doth My Father love Me, because I lay down My life, that I might take it again.** V. 18. **No man taketh it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of My Father.** V. 19. **There was a division therefore again among the Jews for these sayings.** V. 20. **And many of them said, He hath a devil, and is mad; why hear ye Him?** V. 21. **Others said, These are not the words of him that hath a devil. Can a devil open the eyes of the blind?** The chief proof and manifestation of the love of the Good Shepherd consists in this, that He lays down His life, His soul, as a ransom. The self-sacrifice of Jesus was altogether free and in no way forced upon Him. For that reason also did His Father love Him, because the Son was in such thorough accord with Him that He understood His will so completely and acted upon it so cheerfully. And in laying down His life, Jesus has a second object, namely, to take it again. To remain in death and so leave His sheep defenseless would render His entire ministry void. It was necessary for Christ to die, but just as necessary also for Him to arise again. As His sacrifice was free and voluntary, so His return

51) Luther, 13, 1969.

52) *Expositor's Greek Testament*, 1, 791.

to life must be a matter of His own power, of the deliberate use of His strength. The laying down of His life was not due to His yielding to His foes and their cunning; it was an act of His will. He had the power to give His life, to lay it down in death, but He had the power also to take it again. No other man could dream of having such power; every other person succumbs to death, but Jesus differs from all other men in this respect, because He is Himself true God. The fact of His voluntary death gave to His sacrifice its real worth and value; without such free will His sacrifice would have been in vain. And herein He agrees with His Father, whose command He has received and now carries out for the salvation of mankind.

The immediate effect of the entire discourse was that it caused a division among the Jews that were present. Many thought He was talking insane foolishness and that He was possessed of an evil spirit. That is the meanness, the devilish mind of the unbelievers, that they have nothing but mockery and blasphemy for the consoling, precious words of Christ concerning His shepherd's love. But others took a more sensible view. The calm discourse of Jesus could hardly be put into the same category with the ravings of demoniacs. The devil is also able to perform seeming miracles, but never such as will benefit any person in body or soul. The miracle performed upon the blind man was of a nature to admit of only one explanation: divine interference. Thus there are always some people whose hearts accept the glorious truths of the Gospel and learn to trust in Jesus as their Savior.

Christ's Sermon at the Feast of Dedication.

John 10, 22—42.

The testimony of Jesus concerning Himself: V. 22. **And it was at Jerusalem, the Feast of the Dedication, and it was winter.** V. 23. **And Jesus walked in the Temple in Solomon's Porch.** V. 24. **Then came the Jews round about Him, and said unto Him, How long dost Thou make us to doubt? If Thou be the Christ, tell us plainly.** V. 25. **Jesus answered them, I told you, and ye believed not; the works that I do in My Father's name, they bear witness of Me.** V. 26. **But ye believe not, because ye are not of My sheep, as I said unto you.** V. 27. **My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me;** v. 28. **and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand.** V. 29. **My Father, which gave them Me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of My Father's hand.** V. 30. **I and My Father are one.** There is an interval of about two months between this story and the one just preceding it. The Festival of the Dedication had been celebrated since the time of the Maccabees in commemoration of the reconsecration of the Temple after its defilement by Antiochus Epiphanes. Its date was the 25th of Chisleu (December). Jesus had either remained at Jerusalem, or, what is more probable, had spent the intervening time in Perea, a favorite place for retirement. At this time He was in the Temple, walking about or up and down in the splendid portico or cloistered hall which bore Solomon's name. He was soon recognized by the Jews, many of whom had been present at His last discourse and now took occasion to put a question to Him about which there had probably been much discussion since they had seen Him last. They surrounded Him, thus preventing His moving onward. With an almost menacing attitude they put their question: How long dost Thou keep our souls in uncertainty? Their meaning is that they have not yet received sufficient testimony one way or the other to enable them to judge properly. They demanded a plain, unequivocal statement. Jesus reminded them of the fact that He had given them the truth concerning Himself, that not only His words, but also His actions, His miracles, bore testimony of Him. All these things should have convinced them long ago that He was the Christ. It was their unbelief that stood in their way, and this unbelief, in turn, proved that they did not belong to His sheep. Their unbelief in the face of such overwhelming testimony was their own fault. For of His sheep, of the believers in Him, it was true that they heard His voice, as He had explained to them upon a former occasion. With His believers Jesus has entered into a close communion; He responds to their every need. And above all, He, as the Savior and powerful God, gives to them the life everlasting which He has earned for them by His atoning work. No enemy in the world or elsewhere can rob them, can tear them away from Christ by any force. He has them firmly by the hand, He holds them safely in His hand, and therefore they shall never be lost. The Lord here, as one commentator has it, gives us a guarantee against ourselves, against our own weakness and doubt. There are so many factors which tend to stifle faith in our hearts, to make us doubt the sincerity of God's promises toward us, but this word of Christ must overcome all doubt most effectually and definitely. Unless the believers maliciously reject their Savior and trample upon the salvation earned for them, there can be no doubt of His holding them in His hand. If we but trust in His loving mercy and kindness, there shall nothing harm us or tear us away from His side. And this fact He emphasizes still more strongly by stating that the believers are given Him by His Father, who is greater and mightier than all; what enemy will tear them out of His Father's hands? God has given these sheep, these believers, to His Son, in order that they should be saved, and so they are kept by the

power of God through faith unto salvation, 1 Pet. 1, 6. And Jesus and His Father are one. There are two different persons, but only one essence. The will of the Son will never oppose the will of the Father. The Son is God just like the Father, and in the same degree as the Father. And from this it follows that the Father and the Son work together in this great work of saving men, of keeping the believers safe until the end. Note: This glorious, comforting passage is of such beauty and power that it should be memorized by every Christian for use against the wily attacks of the devil and his allies. We are safe in the hands of our heavenly Father and of Jesus Christ, His Son, our Savior.

The Jews accuse Jesus of blasphemy: V. 31. **Then the Jews took up stones again to stone Him.** V. 32. **Jesus answered them, Many good works have I showed you from My Father; for which of those works do ye stone Me?** V. 33. **The Jews answered Him, saying, For a good work we stone Thee not, but for blasphemy, and because that Thou, being a man, makest Thyself God.** V. 34. **Jesus answered them, Is it not written in your Law, I said, Ye are gods?** V. 35. **If He called them gods unto whom the Word of God came, and the Scripture cannot be broken,** v. 36. **say ye of Him whom the Father hath sanctified and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest; because I said, I am the Son of God?** V. 37. **If I do not the works of My Father, believe Me not.** V. 38. **But if I do, though ye believe not Me, believe the works; that ye may know and believe that the Father is in Me, and I in Him.** With growing indignation and resentment the Jews had listened to the statements which Jesus made concerning Himself, until He reached the climax in the declaration of the essential unity of Himself and the Father. Here they could no longer contain themselves. This seemed to them the essence of blasphemy that this man should say He was one with God. And so they took up stones in order to punish Him for His supposed blasphemy, Lev. 24, 14—16, as they had attempted to do once before, chap. 8, 59. But a further word from Jesus arrested their murderous action. He reminded them of the fact that He had shown them many good works which gave evidence of the authority of the Father; which of these was it that deserved stoning? The Jews answered as they saw the situation. They had no objection to His works, to His miracles, as such. But their belief was that He was a mere man, and as such it was blasphemy for Him to arrogate to Himself the Sonship of God. From their blind standpoint they were right: it was blasphemy for a man to claim equality with God, or deity for Himself, Deut. 18, 20; Lev. 14, 10—17. The modern unbelieving teachers that deny the unity of essence of Father and Son on the ground that this is not taught in Scriptures are blinder than the Jews were in this instance. But Jesus here proves to the Jews that His claim was no blasphemy, by referring to Ps. 82, 6. If the leaders of the people, through whom the Word of God was delivered to the Jews, were called gods, how much more does He deserve the designation who was separated, ordained, hallowed, and sent out by God for this work which He was now performing? In bringing this proof, the Lord states an axiom for the inerrancy of Scriptures which needs particular emphasis in our days: The Scripture cannot be dissolved, cannot be broken, cannot be put aside; it must ever stand unchallenged, word for word, as the eternal truth of God. In the case of the Old Testament teachers, the commission of God usually found them engaged in the works of their earthly calling, from which they were raised to their new dignity and received the honoring appellation, but Jesus was set apart by the Father from eternity for the work of salvation, and He was now performing the works of the Father, such works as in themselves are evidence that the Father is in Him and He in the Father. That is the eternal relation in the Trinity between Father and Son: the Son is in the Father and the Father in the Son. This relation has not been set aside by the incarnation of the Son, but was exhibited in the miracles and in all the works which Jesus did. If the Jews therefore chose not to believe His words, they could not deny the evidence of His works. The testimony of His deeds was overwhelmingly strong in establishing the fact of the intimate relationship between Him and the Father, just as He had stated. Note: There is no possibility of weakening the force of this argument but by asserting that the miracles of Jesus did not take place by the power of God. But that would place Jesus in the class of base deceivers and cheats, a conclusion which even the most liberal teachers hesitate to make.

Jesus leaves Jerusalem: V. 39. **Therefore they sought again to take Him; but He escaped out of their hand,** v. 40. **and went away again beyond Jordan into the place where John at first baptized; and there He abode.** V. 41. **And many resorted unto Him and said, John did no miracle; but all things that John spake of this Man were true.** V. 42. **And many believed on Him there.** The argument of Jesus at least made so much impression that the Jews dropped the stones, but they still had the intention of arresting Him; but Jesus, in the power of His divinity, went out of their hands, which sank back powerless. He had again proclaimed the Gospel to the Jews, He had again shown that He is truly the Messiah of Israel. He now went into the region of Perea where some of the early work of John the Baptist had been done, where He stayed for some time. And the effect of His preaching became evident at least in some cases. Many people, who had heard the testimony of

John the Baptist concerning Jesus, had mulled over those sayings and had compared them with the evidence before their eyes in the person and works of Jesus. Though John had performed no miracles, yet they knew him to be a good and wise man and a great prophet. And now that they saw the truth of John's prediction, they were convinced; they learned to believe in Jesus the Savior.

Summary. *Jesus tells the parable of the sheepfold, showing that He is both the Door to the sheep and the Good Shepherd; He gives the Jews the evidence of His divine Sonship and escapes their murderous intentions.*

CHAPTER 11.

The Raising of Lazarus. John 11, 1—46.

The death of Lazarus: V. 1. **Now a certain man was sick, named Lazarus, of Bethany, the town of Mary and her sister Martha.** V. 2. **(It was that Mary which anointed the Lord with ointment, and wiped His feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was sick.)** V. 3. **Therefore his sisters sent unto Him, saying, Lord, behold, he whom Thou lovest is sick.** V. 4. **When Jesus heard that, He said, This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby.** V. 5. **Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus.** V. 6. **When He had heard therefore that he was sick, He abode two days still in the same place where He was.** While Jesus was still in retirement in Perea, on the east side of the Jordan, events were transpiring near Jerusalem which were destined to have a great influence on the lives of many people. At Bethany, a little town about fifteen stadia, almost two miles, from Jerusalem, on the southeast slope of the Mount of Olives, the Lord had some friends. Mary and Martha, both of whom were known to the early Christians, Luke 16, 20, with their brother Lazarus, lived there. In order to identify Lazarus and his sisters more exactly, the evangelist adds that it was Mary that anointed the Lord with spikenard and wiped His feet with her hair. Cp. chap. 12, 3. Lazarus, the brother of this Mary and her sister Martha, was sick. In this emergency the friendship of the sisters, their intimacy with Jesus, suggests to them to send to Him first of all. Here was a whole family of disciples that had learned to place their trust in the Lord without reserve. The sickness of Lazarus was severe, as the repetition of the statement shows, and the notice which the sisters sent to the Lord showed all the anxiety of their hearts. It was really an urgent, pleading request: Lord, behold, he whom Thou lovest is sick. A remarkable, wonderful distinction to be the beloved of the Lord! But it belongs to all Christians of all times: Jesus loves them, has loved them from eternity, and loves them especially since they have accepted His salvation. It is really a model prayer which the sisters sent by their messenger. The mere announcement of trouble is all that is necessary where the Lord is concerned. The words of Jesus when He received the message are rather enigmatic. This sickness was not unto death, He told His disciples, although He knew that physical death had either taken place or was imminent. The Lord's statement was true in a double sense. The illness was not unto eternal death: no sickness of any Christian will terminate in such a way that it will bring him to everlasting death. And the sickness was not unto physical death, because it would give Jesus an opportunity to show His glory and His power over the king of terrors. This sickness would yet have such results that the Son of God would be glorified, that the praise and honor due Him would be forthcoming in greater measure than ever. The evangelist again emphasizes that Jesus loved all three of His disciples in this little family circle. But He made no move to hasten to the bedside of His beloved friend. After the time when He received the message, He still purposely remained in the place where He had been sojourning for two days. The manner in which Jesus deals with those whom He loves may sometimes make the impression upon foolish human minds as though He were not earnestly concerned about their welfare. But an enduring, patient trust in His wisdom and love will never be brought to shame. "God's delays in answering prayers offered to Him by persons in distress are often proofs of His purpose to confer some great kindness; and they are also proofs that His wisdom finds it necessary to permit an increase of the affliction, that His goodness may be more conspicuous in its removal." 53)

The return to Judea: V. 7. **Then after that saith He to His disciples, Let us go into Judea again.** V. 8. **His disciples say unto Him, Master, the Jews of late sought to stone Thee, and goest Thou thither again?** V. 9. **Jesus answered, Are there not twelve hours in the day? If any man walk in the day, he stumbleth not, because he seeth the light of this world.** V. 10. **But if a man walk in the night, he stumbleth, because there is no light in him.** Jesus, after the deliberate delay, announced in a most casual way that He intended to return to Judea, by inviting His disciples to make the journey with Him. But the disciples were filled with apprehension at the prospect. It was probably just as much fear for their own safety as for that.

53) Clarke, *Commentary*, 5, 598.

of the Lord which caused them to remind Him of the recent attempts of the Jews to stone Him, chap. 8, 59; 10, 31. They believed that He should consider His safety first and not expose Himself to danger. Jesus answers their objections in a parable. A person that walks about in the day will not stumble and fall, for there is sufficient light to guide his footsteps and to show him obstructions. But if a person walks around in the darkness, harm may easily befall him, since there is no light to point out hindrances and pitfalls. The eye can be of service only during the day and in the light. The explanation which the Lord wished to convey to His disciples is evident. While His day, as appointed to Him by the Father, lasted, He must continue to walk and to work, and no one could hinder and hurt Him. The last hour, the end of His life, the time of dark suffering, anguish, and sorrow, had not yet come. The Jews would not be able to vent their spite until the time specified and fixed by His Father in the eternal council of love had come. This is true of all disciples of Jesus. So long as the day of their life and work lasts, so long they may carry on their labors without real hindrance. The Lord has fixed the length of each one's labor, to the one a greater, to the other a smaller measure. During that time the believers, each in his own station, but in the service of the Lord, will do his share for the Master. At the Lord's time, and not before, He will call His servants home.

The announcement of the death of Lazarus: V. 11. **These things said He; and after that He saith unto them, Our friend Lazarus sleepeth; but I go that I may awake him out of sleep.** V. 12. **Then said His disciples, Lord, if he sleep, he shall do well.** V. 13. **Howbeit Jesus spoke of his death; but they thought that He had spoken of taking of rest in sleep.** V. 14. **Then said Jesus unto them plainly, Lazarus is dead.** V. 15. **And I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, to the intent ye may believe; nevertheless let us go unto him.** V. 16. **Then said Thomas, which is called Didymus, unto his fellow-disciples, Let us also go that we may die with Him.** After quieting the fears of His disciples as to His own safety, Jesus thought the time fitting to make His important announcement. He told them that Lazarus, their friend, was lying asleep, was even now sound asleep. That is the Lord's manner of speaking of death, as of a sleep. He knew of the death of Lazarus by His omniscience, and He wanted to impart this knowledge to the disciples in a form with which they should have been familiar from the Old Testament manner of speaking. It is a great comfort for the believers that the Lord Himself speaks of the death of His disciples as a falling asleep; it is a quiet and secure rest in the interval between this life and that of the Kingdom of Glory. Jesus also stated His intention of going to Bethany for the purpose of awaking Lazarus from his sleep, of bringing him back to this life for a season. But the disciples, with their usual denseness, did not understand the Lord's speech, but thought only of physical sleep. Their immediate inference is that a quiet sleep in severe sickness usually points to a quick recovery, and that therefore they need not take the dangerous step of returning to Judea. Jesus therefore told them in plain, unmistakable words that Lazarus had died. He had permitted His friend to die. And Jesus was glad on their account that He had not been present in Bethany at the time of His friend's dying. He had the purpose of strengthening their faith by a miracle which He intended to perform shortly, the greatest of all His miracles, in a manner of speaking. He wanted to start out for Bethany at once, in order to realize His object. It was at this point that Thomas, called Didymus (twin), showed His misunderstanding of the entire situation. He thought that Jesus was deliberately walking to His death, and he urged the other disciples to go along. He felt equal to the ordeal of going into death with his Master, for the love which he now felt for Him. The love of Christ puts divine courage into the heart of the most timid Christian.

The faith of Martha: V. 17. **Then when Jesus came, He found that he had lain in the grave four days already.** V. 18. **Now Bethany was nigh unto Jerusalem, about fifteen furlongs off;** v. 19. **and many of the Jews came to Martha and Mary to comfort them concerning their brother.** V. 20. **Then Martha, as soon as she heard that Jesus was coming, went and met Him; but Mary sat still in the house.** V. 21. **Then said Martha unto Jesus, Lord, if Thou hadst been here, my brother had not died.** V. 22. **But I know that even now, whatsoever Thou wilt ask of God, God will give it Thee.** The journey from that section of Perea where Jesus had been staying to Bethany took about two days, and when Jesus therefore reached the town, He was greeted with the intelligence that Lazarus had been in the grave four days. The burial of the dead in warmer countries must take place very quickly, lest decay set in. In the house of Martha and Mary there was a large assembly of mourners and sympathizers. Since the distance from Jerusalem was only fifteen stadia, a matter of a little more than 3,000 yards, many Jews from the capital city had come to the sisters to express their condolence in their bereavement. It seems that Mary and Martha had a host of acquaintances, if not of friends, in Jerusalem. The days of deep mourning lasted for seven days, during which it was forbidden to wash, to anoint oneself, to put on shoes, to study, or to engage in any business. Just as soon as the news of

Christ's coming had been conveyed to Martha, she left the house to meet Him. She was eager to hear words of comfort out of His mouth; for mere men cannot take away the sorrow of death. But the comfort and sympathy of Jesus is of a nature to drive away all the piercing pain or grief. If people, in every bereavement and sorrow, would only turn at once to the consolation of the Lord's Word, there would never be the severe after-effects of unrestrained grief after the manner of this world, 1 Thess. 4, 13. Mary remained at home, sitting on the ground or on a low stool, according to Jewish custom; for all chairs and couches are reversed at the time of the burial. It was not merely her sorrow and distress that caused her to remain at home, but the fact that she wanted to give her older sister, the mistress of the house, the first opportunity to talk to the Savior. No sooner had Martha come to Jesus than she called out to Him: Lord, if Thou hadst been here, my brother would not have died. There is just the slightest shade of reproach in the words, but also the firm trust and faith in the Lord's ability to help in all vicissitudes of life. The mere presence of Christ in the house of sickness would have banished death and its terrors. And even now, she goes on to say, she knows and is firmly convinced that every petition of Christ is heard by His heavenly Father. Martha naturally used the same expressions which she had so often heard out of the mouth of Jesus. The Lord had always referred His works to the Father, and stated that He worked at the will of the Father. So Martha also expressed her strong faith in the terms with which she had become familiar. If only a Christian has such sound foundation for his faith, resting it upon the conviction gained from the Word of Christ, then he is able to conquer anything.

Jesus, the Resurrection and the Life: V. 23. **Jesus saith unto her, Thy brother shall rise again.** V. 24. **Martha saith unto Him, I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day.** V. 25. **Jesus said unto her, I am the Resurrection and the Life; he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live;** v. 26. **and whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die. Believest thou this?** V. 27. **She saith unto Him, Yea, Lord; I believe that Thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world.** Jesus answered Martha's pleading with a beautiful word of comfort, which incidentally tests her faith. The words sounded as though Jesus were referring only to the final resurrection, on the last day. Here was the hope of faith to which she could always cling. And Martha proved equal to the test; she, with all the other true believers among the Jews, believed in the resurrection of the dead. If nothing more were forthcoming from the hand of Jesus, she would be fully satisfied with this gift of His grace. But her words: I know that he will rise in the resurrection on the last day, conveyed her hopes that the Lord would help also at the present time, at once. This proof of Martha's humble, but firm trust in Him drew from Jesus that gem of sayings which is the glorious anchor of faith throughout the ages. Jesus, our Savior, is the Resurrection and the Life. All life, and the giving and returning of life to men, is centered in Him. Eternal life is in Him from eternity. And therefore He can give life, even when death had apparently claimed a person for his own. And with the resurrection the true life in and with Him will have its beginning. We Christians believe in the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting, because our faith rests upon Him who died for us and rose again, in order that we might live with Him forever. The believers, therefore, though they seemingly succumb to temporal death, yet have life, are full possessors of life in the very midst of death, they are partakers and sharers with Christ in the full and complete life that had no beginning for Him and shall have no end for them that put their trust in His redemption alone. Death is only the gateway to the full and perfect life; it has no terrors for the Christian, since it has been swallowed up in victory by the resurrection of Jesus. Whatever experience believers have of death is all on this side of the grave; here the fear of death and the terrors of hell sometimes assail them very keenly. But they conquer all these horrors through faith in the words of Christ, and in the very moment of dying, death is overcome; they fall asleep in the wounds of Jesus, and in the next moment they awake in heaven. Since this trust must be found in the heart of every believer, Jesus puts the searching question to Martha: Believest thou this? And Martha joyfuly assents and expresses her unwavering faith in her Lord as the promised Christ, the Son of God, as He was prophesied by all the patriarchs and sages of old, whose work should culminate in the overcoming of the last bitter enemy, death. Note: The certainty of the resurrection of the body, as based upon the work of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, always inspires new hope in the hearts of the believers, even in the days of the greatest sorrow and misfortune, in the midst of sickness and death. This word: I believe in the resurrection of the body, is stronger than death. Though the dead may have rested in their graves for hundreds and even thousands of years, though their flesh has long since been consumed by worms and their bones have fallen into dust, yet they shall arise on the last day.

Mary's coming to the Lord: V. 28. **And when she had so said, she went her way and called Mary, her sister, secretly, saying, The Master is come and calleth for thee.** V. 29. **As soon as she heard that, she arose quickly and came unto Him.** V. 30.

Now Jesus was not yet come into the town, but was in that place where Martha met Him. V. 31. **The Jews then which were with her in the house and comforted her, when they saw Mary that she rose up hastily and went out, followed her, saying, She goeth unto the grave to weep there.** V. 32. **Then when Mary was come where Jesus was, and saw Him, she fell down at His feet, saying unto Him, Lord, if Thou hadst been here, my brother had not died.** Martha had gone to the Lord for comfort, and she had received it in full measure. Instead of getting the customary cold sympathy and a stereotyped mumbling of condolence which leaves the heart empty, she had received such an assurance as filled her heart with joy and peace. And she wanted her sister to partake of the same comforting hope. So she hurried back home, and on account of the presence of the Jews, of whose enmity toward Christ she was fully aware, she called Mary aside and told her privately that the Master was near by and called her. Jesus had not expressed the wish to see Mary, but the intuition of Martha was not wrong in concluding that He would be only too glad to bring comfort to this sister also. Mary lost no time in hurrying to Jesus. Leaving the assembly of mourners without so much as a word of explanation, she went out of the town to meet Jesus along the way, for Jesus was tarrying at the place where Martha had spoken to Him. He had purposely delayed His coming, since He wanted to see and talk to the sisters alone. But when Mary hurried from the house, the Jews that were present thought that she had been overcome by a paroxysm of grief and intended to weep at the grave. So they followed her, probably with the intention of consoling her as best they could. But she left them far behind, came to Jesus, and fell down at His feet with the same words of firm faith in His power to help, not unmixed with gentle reproach, as those used by her sister. A similar lament is heard also in our days. There is a reminder connected with it that the Lord could and therefore should have prevented the misfortune. This in itself is not sinful, for a dead apathy is not a Christian virtue, but it must not go to that limit that it accuses or asks the reason for the chastising. That would be inexcusable.

The sorrow of Jesus: V. 33. **When Jesus therefore saw her weeping, and the Jews also weeping which came with her, He groaned in the spirit, and was troubled,** v. 34. **and said, Where have ye laid him? They said unto Him, Lord, come and see.** V. 35. **Jesus wept.** V. 36. **Then said the Jews, Behold, how He loved him!** V. 37. **And some of them said, Could not this man, which opened the eyes of the blind, have caused that even this man should not have died?** While Mary had poured out the sorrow of her heart to the Lord, the Jews that had been in the house with her also came up. Now Mary was weeping and wailing, and the Jews joined her, for such deep and unrestrained sorrow is infectious. All this moved Jesus very deeply; He was indignant in the spirit, deeply affected. The spectacle distressed Him so badly that He worked Himself up into a state of anxiety and emotion. He was strongly agitated over the power which the enemy of mankind, death, was here exhibiting over human beings. For death had certainly shown himself in this instance as the king of terrors, in taking from these sisters their brother and protector, one who was, besides, a friend to Himself. Death is a cruel enemy, for in a moment he destroys the happiness of families and friends, and rends the closest ties asunder. And behind death stands the hideous figure of him that has the power of death, the devil, the murderer from the beginning. Jesus inquired for the location of the grave, since He wanted those present to accompany Him there. He, the Source and Champion of life, here went forth to meet the enemy of life and to tear his prey from him. This He could do, for He was more than a mere human being; He possessed the power of Almighty God. But that He was also a true human being He here showed. For as the procession was coming near to the grave, the tears arose to the eyes of Jesus, and He wept. The feeling of grief was so strong as to draw these tears from His eyes. And with His tears He hallowed the tears, the grief, of the believers at the graves of those that are dear to them. This action of Jesus elicited various comments. Some of the Jews were deeply moved by this touching show of love and sympathy. But others were skeptical. They knew of His healing of the man that had been born blind, and in a half-puzzled, half-jeering way asked why He did not prevent death, with such power at His disposal. The fact that unbelievers sneer at the one or the other feature of Christianity should in no way discourage the Christians in their work, for if Christ had such experiences, His followers can expect no less.

The arrival at the grave: V. 38. **Jesus, therefore, again groaning in Himself, cometh to the grave. It was a cave, and a stone lay upon it.** V. 39. **Jesus said, Take ye away the stone. Martha, the sister of him that was dead, saith unto Him, Lord, by this time he stinketh; for he hath been dead four days.** V. 40. **Jesus saith unto her, Said I not unto thee, that, if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God?** V. 41. **Then they took away the stone from the place where the dead was laid. And Jesus lifted up His eyes and said, Father, I thank Thee that Thou hast heard Me.** V. 42. **And I knew that Thou hearest Me always; but because of the people which stand by I said it, that they may believe that Thou hast sent Me.** When Jesus was aware of the

bitter mockery which His enemies were trying to heap upon Him even at this time, He was again strongly agitated, filled with indignation, but this time over their unreasonableness and blindness. That is the height of hypocrisy, when people assume a pious behavior, but incidentally are full of enmity and hatred toward Christ. Meanwhile they had come to the grave, which was an opening hewn into the rock, upon which a large stone had been laid. When Jesus told some of the men present to lift off the stone, Martha interposed. The body was now, literally, one of four days; it had lain in the grave for four days, and therefore she knew that decay had progressed to such an extent as to make the odor extremely unpleasant. In the greatness of her grief Martha was not using her spiritual mind. She probably thought that Jesus merely wanted to take a last look at the face of His friend. Thus the believers, in the bitter hour, when they see the evidences of death and decay before their eyes, are so absorbed in the contemplation of their terrors that they no longer lift up their minds to the King of Life. The Lord reproved Martha for the smallness of her faith, for He had held out to her the certainty of seeing the glory of God before her eyes. In the resurrection of the dead the glory of God is revealed. If we but believe with all our hearts in Christ, who is the Resurrection and the Life, we shall see the glory of God, when He raises the dead from their graves. When the stone had then been lifted off, Jesus raised His eyes to heaven and spoke a prayer of thanksgiving, indicating the intimacy of the union between the Father and Himself. The Lord had repeatedly said that He had been sent by the Father to perform certain works and miracles, and that He did nothing without the Father, and this prayer again gave evidence to that effect. He spoke with full confidence as though the soul of Lazarus had even then returned to his dead body. He thanked His Father for hearing Him; He expressed the certainty of His knowledge that He would always be heard in the same way; and He stated that He made His prayer for the sake of the people present, that they might see the intimacy obtaining between them, and that they might believe in His mission from the Father. Jesus here appears as true man, who, before undertaking a difficult task, looks up to God and pleads for His help. And the Lord's prayer is a model also in this respect, that true faith thanks God for the receipt of His gifts and mercies even in advance, knowing that the granting of the petition is certain.

The miracle and its effect: V. 43. **And when He had thus spoken, He cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth.** V. 44. **And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with grave-clothes; and his face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus saith unto them, Loose him, and let him go.** V. 45. **Then many of the Jews which came to Mary, and had seen the things which Jesus did, believed on Him.** V. 46. **But some of them went their ways to the Pharisees, and told them what things Jesus had done.** After Jesus had spoken His prayer to His heavenly Father, He did not delay. Addressing Himself to the corpse in the grave, He commanded the dead man with a loud voice: Lazarus, come forth; literally: Hither, out! And the almighty word caused the miracle to happen, brought the man upon whom the process of decay had begun back to life, and gave him the strength to leave the grave, though he was still bound with the customary grave-clothes and had his face covered with a sudary. Jesus merely told the bystanders to remove the confining bandages which hindered the man's movements, and then to permit him to leave, as the curious glances of the multitude would be most embarrassing to him. There can be no doubt as to the reality of the miracle. The man Jesus Christ has power over death; He calls the dead back to life at will. The human nature was the means and instrument of Christ, of His almighty, divine power, it partakes of the divine majesty. This is the greatest miracle which Christ performed, so far as is recorded in Scripture, with the exception of His own resurrection. It is the guarantee of our hope and belief in the resurrection on the last day, when His almighty voice will call our bodies forth from the graves. The effect of such an exceptional miracle was twofold. Some of the Jews that had come to the sisters now were fully convinced as to the truth of Christ's words and works; they believed in Him. But others there were whose hearts had even then been hardened beyond recall. They took occasion to report the miracle to the Pharisees, in order that these arch-enemies might make their plans accordingly. It was the fate of Christ, as it is that of His Gospel and its proclamation, to be to some a savor of death unto death, to others a savor of life unto life. Blessed are they that put their trust in Him!

The Council of the Jews concerning Christ's Removal. John 11, 47—57.

The prophecy of Caiaphas: V. 47. **Then gathered the chief priests and the Pharisees a council and said, What do we? For this man doeth many miracles.** V. 48. **If we let Him thus alone, all men will believe on Him; and the Romans shall come and take away both our place and nation.** V. 49. **And one of them, named Caiaphas, being the high priest that same year, said unto them, Ye know nothing at all,** v. 50. **nor consider that it is expedient for us that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not.** V. 51. **And this spake he not of himself, but, being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus should die for that nation,** v. 52. **and not for that nation only,**

but that also He should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad. The matter of the raising of Lazarus was deemed so important that an immediate meeting of the Sanhedrin seemed advisable. Here the chief priests, who were Sadducees, and their enemies, the Pharisees, came together in perfect harmony, since the object was to remove the hated Nazarene. When the meeting had been assembled, they asked one another the frank question: Here this man is doing many signs and miracles, and what are we doing about it? They could not deny the fact that miracles were being performed by Jesus, but they hardened their hearts as to their meaning and purpose. Their one concern was as to the possible consequences to themselves and to the Jewish nation as a political unit. If they would take no steps to hinder this ministry of miracles, the result would be that all the common people would believe in Him as the Messiah. The chances were that they would then proclaim Him king of Judea, and this, in turn, would result in the Jews' losing the last remnant of political power and standing. The Romans would simply come and destroy the city and lead the people away into captivity. The Jewish leaders did not know that they were thereby stating the fate of both city and nation which came upon them because of their rejection of the King of Grace. But while the members of the Sanhedrin were thus debating the question, Caiaphas, the high priest of that year, arose and made a statement amounting to a solution of the problem as it lay before them. He told them: Ye know nothing at all. They were talking nonsense and offering no sensible means for removing the difficulty. They did not consider the most obvious mode of procedure. The most expedient thing would obviously be to have this one man, who, in their opinion, was responsible for the agitation and unrest among the people, die. As Caiaphas put the matter: It is expedient for you that one man die for, in the stead of, the people, and the whole nation perish not. Here was cold-blooded craftiness; for the suggestion evidently was to have Jesus put to death as quickly as possible. By sacrificing Jesus, they would both rid themselves of a troublesome person and give to the Roman authorities an evidence of their loyalty. But aside from their meaning for the situation at that time, the words of Caiaphas, as the evangelist points out, were an unconscious, but none the less glorious prophecy. Jesus should die, not only for Israel, but for the whole world, and His death should result in a gathering and final uniting into one great spiritual communion of all that would believe on Him and thus receive the benefit of His death. In all nations of the earth are such as will become the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. They were at that time still scattered far and wide, but as the preaching of the Gospel has reached them, they have turned from their idols to the living God and have joined the communion of saints.

The result of the deliberations: **V. 53. Then from that day forth they took counsel together for to put Him to death. V. 54. Jesus therefore walked no more openly among the Jews, but went thence into a country near to the wilderness, into a city called Ephraim, and there continued with His disciples. V. 55. And the Jews' Passover was nigh at hand; and many went out of the country up to Jerusalem before the Passover to purify themselves. V. 56. Then sought they for Jesus, and spake among themselves, as they stood in the Temple, What think ye that He will not come to the feast? V. 57. Now both the chief priests and the Pharisees had given a commandment, that, if any man knew where He were, he should show it, that they might take Him.** The members of the Sanhedrin acted upon the summary declaration of Caiaphas as they understood it, for it agreed with the inmost wishes of the majority of them. They formulated no definite plan on that day, but whenever they came together for their meetings in the Hall of Polished Stones, they reverted also to this important business, and considered ways and means for putting Christ to death with some show of right. Jesus was fully aware of their resolutions and intentions, and He therefore purposely avoided Jerusalem for a while, sojourning in a little town named Ephraim, northeast of Jerusalem, near the wilderness of Bethaven, until He should be ready for the last great Passion. Meanwhile the festival of the Passover was again drawing near, and the usual advance guard of pilgrims arrived at Jerusalem. Most of these came so early because they had to perform certain Levitical purifications before they could take part in the festival, Num. 9, 10; 2 Chron. 30, 17. Many of these people were anxious to see Jesus, and He was one of the chief topics of conversation wherever a group of people assembled in the Temple and elsewhere. There were all manner of guesses as to whether He would dare to come up for the feast, since the definite command had now been issued that He must be apprehended. The orders were that any one knowing the whereabouts of the Nazarene must give information. There was no need for them to anticipate: when Christ's hour was come, He appeared in Jerusalem of His own free will.

Summary. *Jesus raises His friend Lazarus from the grave, where he had lain for four days, whereupon His death is determined upon by the rulers of the Jews, orders being issued which aimed at His apprehension.*

CHAPTER 12.

The Anointing of Jesus. John 12, 1—11.

Jesus at supper: V. 1. **Then Jesus, six days before the Passover, came to Bethany, where Lazarus was which had been dead, whom He raised from the dead.** V. 2. **There they made Him a supper, and Martha served; but Lazarus was one of them that sat at the table with Him.** V. 3. **Then took Mary a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped His feet with her hair; and the house was filled with the odor of the ointment.** Cp. Mark 14, 3—9. The evangelist marks the introduction to the great Passion of the Lord. It was six days before the festival of the Passover, which was celebrated by the Jews in commemoration of their deliverance out of Egypt. The Passover proper was celebrated on the evening of the 14th of Abib, or Nisan, the spring month, and was usually taken together with the Feast of Unleavened Bread, unless one wanted to differentiate for special reasons. Six days before this day, in this instance, was Saturday, the Sabbath of the Jews. Bethany was a favorite stopping-place of Jesus, since Mary, Martha, and Lazarus, His friends, were living there. The evangelist here notes especially that Lazarus, whom Jesus had raised from the dead, had his home in that town. The beloved Master, to whom the little family of disciples owed so much, was received also in this instance with every mark of loving respect. They made a supper for Him, an evening meal, after the close of the Sabbath. The busy Martha was hostess, she waited at table, the work in which she took the greatest pleasure, Luke 10, 38—42. It is expressly stated that Lazarus was one of those that reclined at the table as one of the guests. There had been no illusion about his return to life. He was enjoying life and health as much as ever. While the meal was in progress, Mary, the other sister, came into the supper-room bearing a vessel containing one litra or libra (about eleven ounces avoirdupois) of genuine and very precious nard made from myrrh, the juice of the Arabian myrtle. This ointment was so costly and such a luxury that only the well-to-do could afford to use it for ordinary purposes. But Mary apparently paid no attention to this fact. As Jesus was reclining at the table, resting on His left arm, with His feet stretched somewhat to the rear, Mary not only anointed His head, as Mark and Matthew relate, but especially His feet. Profusely, lavishly, she used the precious ointment, and then wiped the Lord's feet with her hair. It was an act of spontaneous devotion and loving loyalty. Naturally, the odor of the ointment, used in such profusion, filled not only the room, but the entire house, thus attracting attention at once, also to the costliness of the offering. It is altogether well-pleasing to the Lord if people, for love of Him, bring offerings for the adornment of churches, where the congregation comes together for worship. The factor of utility must not be emphasized to the exclusion of all other considerations when churches are built.

The objection of Judas: V. 4. **Then saith one of His disciples, Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, which should betray Him,** v. 5. **Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor?** V. 6. **This he said, not that he cared for the poor, but because he was a thief, and had the bag, and bare what was put therein.** V. 7. **Then said Jesus, Let her alone; against the day of My burying hath she kept this.** V. 8. **For the poor always ye have with you; but Me ye have not always.** When Mary gave the wonderful evidence of her devotion to the Lord, all the disciples were more or less taken aback, Matt. 26, 8. Their frugal manner of living immediately scented useless extravagance. But there was one in their midst, Judas of Kerioth, the son of Simon, who afterwards betrayed the Lord, that voiced his objections in no uncertain terms. The value of the ointment was three hundred denarii (fifty dollars or somewhat more). Devoid of all sentiment and real feeling as he was, Judas demanded why the ointment had not been sold for this sum, in order that the money might be given to the poor. But his apparent solicitude for the poor people was all sham, intended to mask the real interest which he felt, that of getting the money into his clutches. The poor were nothing to him; to them he did not devote one moment of anxious thought. Judas was a thief. As treasurer of the little band of disciples he carried the wallet for them all, had complete charge of all moneys. Since a system of auditing was hardly to be thought of, Judas could easily abstract small sums from time to time. And here he was obliged to see a splendid opportunity lost. Note: Judas is a warning example for all times. He undoubtedly had been a simple believer in Christ when first he was called to join the little band of disciples. But the temptations connected with the office which was entrusted to him proved too much for his endurance. His love of money, his covetousness, came to the front; he began to steal, and faith fled from his heart. But with faith gone and avarice reigning in the heart, it was an easy matter for the devil to take possession of Judas to such an extent that he betrayed his Savior. Jesus did not wish to expose Judas at this time, and therefore is satisfied with taking Mary's part and defending her action. He explained that the action of the woman was a part of the preparation for His burial, which was destined soon to take place. Far from censuring her, therefore, they should rather have commended her highly. And so far as the point raised by Judas was concerned: the poor they

always had with them. There was always opportunity to do good to these unfortunates that were in destitute circumstances. But the presence of Jesus would soon be removed from them; there was but little time left to give Him special evidences of love and devotion. Thus this apparent extravagance, being occasional only, is fully justified. And the saying of Christ finds its application even to-day. It is self-evident that a congregation will take care of the poor in its own midst; but after this has been provided for, a little luxury in the interest of beautifying the services of the Lord is by no means displeasing to Him.

People come for the sake of Lazarus: V. 9. **Much people of the Jews therefore knew that He was there; and they came not for Jesus' sake only, but that they might see Lazarus also, whom He had raised from the dead.** V. 10. **But the chief priests consulted that they might put Lazarus also to death,** v. 11. **because that by reason of him many of the Jews went away and believed on Jesus.** In the course of the same evening, while Jesus was still in Bethany, many Jews came out from Jerusalem. The news of His coming had traveled ahead of Him, after the usual manner of such reports. But it was not only the interest in Jesus that brought them out, the compelling motive rather being a morbid curiosity to see that man Lazarus, of whom it was definitely reported that Christ had raised him from the dead, many Jews having been present. Although some time had passed by since that event, the miracle was still the great sensation. Here was a matter which again caused great uneasiness to the rulers of the Jews, whose spies were everywhere. This living witness was a powerful testimony for the almighty power of Jesus, and might thus become the reason why many people might come to faith in Christ. This must be prevented at all costs. And so the chief priests consulted about the matter and made the monstrous proposal, the cold-blooded resolution, to commit murder; for to put the innocent Lazarus to death was nothing short of that. Here the devilish character of self-hardening unbelief is evident. Rather than have more Jews desert their false cause and believe in Jesus, their Savior, these leaders of the Jewish nation devise one murderous scheme after the other. Whenever the enemies of Christ seek to harm Him and the preaching of His Gospel, even in our days, they always manage to concoct a plausible reason to salve their own consciences. But their acts are murder and arson just the same, no matter what high-sounding names they invent to cover their crimes.

Christ's Entry into Jerusalem.

John 12, 12—19.

V. 12. **On the next day much people that were come to the feast, when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem,** v. 13. **took branches of palm-trees, and went forth to meet Him, and cried, Hosanna! Blessed is the King of Israel that cometh in the name of the Lord.** V. 14. **And Jesus, when He had found a young ass, sat thereon; as it is written,** v. 15. **Fear not, daughter of Sion; behold, thy King cometh, sitting on an ass's colt.** V. 16. **These things understood not His disciples at the first; but when Jesus was glorified, then remembered they that these things were written of Him, and that they had done these things unto Him.** That Jesus had come as far as Bethany was now generally known in Jerusalem, and when He therefore set out for the capital the next morning, Sunday, a peculiar enthusiasm took hold of the pilgrims. A great multitude of people started out from the city to meet Him. As they went along the road, they took the branches, or fronds, symbols of victory and rejoicing which were borne by the celebrants at the great festivals, and went out to meet the Lord. In joyful exultation they broke forth into the strains of the last Hallel Psalm, thus unwittingly giving to Christ the honor due Him as the Helper and Savior, Ps. 118, 25. 26. For these words are a prophecy of Christ: Help, Lord; hail to the King, the Messiah! The entire demonstration was indeed only a momentary exultation. It was inspired by God for the sake of showing His Son the eventual homage which men would have to give Him at the final revealing of His glory, Phil. 2, 9—11. John does not relate the manner by which Jesus obtained the foal upon which He rode down to the city over the Mount of Olives, but calls attention to the prophecy which was thereby fulfilled, Zech. 9, 9. The daughter of Zion is the Church of Christ, the sum total of all believers in the salvation gained through His blood. The King is Jesus Himself, at that time still in poverty and humility, but still a King most mighty. His coming banishes all fear, for it means the subduing of all enemies. Only people must not get the idea that His kingdom is of this world, as a great many modern theological leaders are dreaming. "In His kingdom, in which He is King and Lord, He does not teach how we should till the soil, plow, sow, reap, attend to household matters, collect money, wage war, govern land and people, but places that in charge of worldly kings and lords. . . . For Christ in His kingdom teaches us through His Word that we are poor, lost sinners, condemned to death, subject to the devil; but that He, through His death and blood, has delivered us from all sins, from death, and from the power of the devil, in order that by faith in Him we should be justified and saved." 54) Though the disciples of Jesus joined in with the people, led them in the singing in fact, yet they did not understand the meaning of the demonstration

54) Luther, 13b, 1746. 1747.

at that time. It was only after Christ had entered into His glory, through His Passion and resurrection, that the minds of the disciples, having been illumined by the Spirit from on high, called all these things to remembrance and understood them in the light of the prophecy. Note: A Christian should never be discouraged if the sense of some passage in Scriptures seems to escape him, but should continue his eager quest for knowledge of God. The Spirit of God often opens up the meaning of a passage in a most remarkable way, and never without a resulting comforting and strengthening of faith.

Further results of the raising of Lazarus: V. 17. **The people therefore that was with Him when He called Lazarus out of his grave, and raised him from the dead, bare record.** V. 18. **For this cause the people also met Him for that they heard that He had done this miracle.** V. 19. **The Pharisees therefore said among themselves, Perceive ye how ye prevail nothing? Behold, the world is gone after Him.** The ovation given to Jesus on the day of His entry into Jerusalem would probably never have reached such proportions, if it had not been for the fact that the witnesses of the raising of Lazarus spread the news on all sides. They had been present upon that occasion; they had heard the call of Jesus while the man still lay in his grave; they had seen Jesus raise the dead man and bring him back to life. This miracle therefore made Jesus the object of such great interest at this time, the knowledge that it had been performed brought many people out with the multitude that would under other circumstances have probably stayed at home. For the moment the sentiment was strongly in favor of Christ. And the Pharisees, the rulers of the people, had to acknowledge their helplessness in the face of such popular acclaim. Neither threatenings nor excommunications had any effect upon the people; they all, with one accord, took the side of Jesus. So the Pharisees had to admit their failure. In spite of all their crafty plans they could not get Jesus into their power. When His time had come, He came of His own free will, He took the suffering and death upon Himself for the benefit of the world. He delivered Himself into the hands of His enemies, just as He had planned it and at His time.

The First-Fruits of the Heathen.

John 12, 20—33.

The Greeks apply to the disciples: V. 20. **And there were certain Greeks among them that came up to worship at the feast.** V. 21. **The same came therefore to Philip, which was of Bethsaida of Galilee, and desired him, saying, Sir, we would see Jesus.** V. 22. **Philip cometh and telleth Andrew; and again Andrew and Philip tell Jesus.** Certain Greeks there were among the crowds that came up to worship at the feast. They may have been men living in the Decapolis or in Galilee, men of pure Greek extraction, perhaps not even proselytes of the gate; they were heathen. But they had heard of the true God who was adored among the Jews. And they now had ample opportunity to hear also of Jesus, for all men were talking of Him and the great miracle which He had performed. They were acquainted with Philip, since his home was in Bethsaida, and they may have met him often in the North. Their wish was soon stated. They told Philip that they wished to see Jesus. Here was the desire of awakening faith, for they were not so much concerned about seeing Jesus with the eyes of their body as about the consummation of their hope to find in Him the Savior. Philip did not dare to decide the matter of introducing these Greeks to Jesus alone, so he called upon his fellow-townsman Andrew to help him decide. What made them hesitate to lay the request of the Greeks before the Lord was probably the prejudice which they, as members of the Jewish Church, had against all Gentiles. The many passages of the Old Testament which speak of the conversion of the Gentiles were at that time hidden before their eyes. But after some consultation the two disciples decided to bring the matter to the attention of the Master. Note: To this day it is often a hard matter for race and language prejudices to be overcome in the work of the Kingdom. It is necessary to be fully and absolutely convinced of the fact that Jesus is the Savior of the whole world in order to carry out one's missionary duty properly.

The hour of Christ's glorification: V. 23. **And Jesus answered them, saying, The hour is come that the Son of Man should be glorified.** V. 24. **Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.** V. 25. **He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal.** V. 26. **If any man serve Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there shall also My servant be. If any man serve Me, him will My Father honor.** Jesus was deeply moved by the request of the Greeks to become acquainted with Him, to know the Savior. It showed Him that the hour, the time, had come when He was to be taken from the world, the culmination of His life's work, His glorification through His suffering, death, resurrection, and ascension. For the general reception of the Gentiles into the Kingdom of Grace, according to Scriptures, was to be the work of the glorified Christ; after His entrance into glory He was to gather the scattered sheep among the Gentiles. But the way to this glory lay through death. Most solemnly the Lord declares that the full worth of a grain of seed is accomplished only through its apparent death and decay in the ground.

Like a grain sown into the ground and decomposed, so is the death of the Savior. But His resurrection is like the blade which springs up from the seemingly dead seed; and this blade brings forth an abundance of fruit. The head that was laid into the grave in deep sorrow has now been crowned with glory, and the glory of the exalted Son of Man will convert many Gentiles, Is. 11, 1. But herein is an admonition also for the disciples, who are pledged to follow their Master. If any man love his soul, this present life, if he hopes to gain everything for himself in this world, he will lose the true life in and with Christ. It is one of the demands of Christian discipleship that all followers of Christ die unto this present life, with all it has to offer, daily. Only he that hateth his life in this present world, that is willing to give up and sacrifice everything for the sake of the Master, will guard and keep his soul unto life eternal. Cp. Matt. 10, 39; 16, 25; Mark 8, 35; Luke 9, 24; 17, 33. True service of Christ is shown in the following of Him, in emulating His example of unselfish ministry and devotion. And Jesus, in turn, will not permit such deeds of unselfish love to go unrewarded. His servants, those that are in continual attendance upon Him, shall share His place of everlasting bliss. And not only that; but the true servants of Christ, that serve Him in faith, in whatever way He suggests, will be regarded as precious, and be valued very highly in the eyes of God the Father Himself.

The manner of Christ's glorification: V. 27. **Now is My soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save Me from this hour; but for this cause came I unto this hour.** V. 28. **Father, glorify Thy name. Then came there a voice from heaven, saying, I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again.** V. 29. **The people therefore that stood by and heard it said that it thundered; others said, An angel spake to Him.** V. 30. **Jesus answered and said, This voice came not because of Me, but for your sakes.** V. 31. **Now is the judgment of this world; now shall the prince of this world be cast out.** V. 32. **And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me.** V. 33. **This He said, signifying what death He should die.** The thought of the coming ordeal, in a way, filled the soul of Christ with dread, He was deeply moved and agitated at the prospect. He felt something of the dread and fear of death. For Jesus was true man, whose flesh and blood shrank from the idea of death. Death is a judgment of God upon sins and sinners. To die in the stead of all men, as their substitute, and thus as the greatest sinner of all times, was a thought which filled the soul of Jesus with dread. He hardly knows what to say in this emergency. As though seeking counsel from His disciples, He asks: Shall I say, Father, deliver Me out of this hour? Should He plead to be saved the ordeal which His human nature dreaded? Every Christian may say a similar prayer when the hour of tribulation comes upon him; only he must never set his own will above the will of his heavenly Father. But even the thought of becoming unfaithful to His Father's trust Jesus repudiates, since it is for this reason that He came into this hour. It is the goal and culmination of His life's work. He cannot disappoint His Father at this time. Without His death His life would be fruitless. And so He corrects His prayer by asking that the work for which He came into the world continue: Father, glorify Thy name! Jesus had fully regained His assurance, the spiritual balance necessary for the carrying out of the plan for the salvation of men. His death would redound to the glory of the Father, as would the whole work of salvation. And so Christ was ready, even at the cost of the greatest agony. And no sooner had He finished His prayer than a voice from heaven came in answer that God both had glorified, and would again glorify, His name. His name had been glorified in countless instances, but especially at the incarnation of the Son, and it would be glorified in a still more wonderful manner by the great Passion. So the answer of the Father was both an assurance and a promise. But it was made principally for the sake of the people. They should understand that it was God giving testimony of His Son, on account of the essential intimacy that obtained between them. The ignorant Jews had heard the sound, but had not understood the words. And so they expressed their opinion, some thinking that there had been a clap of thunder, others, that an angel had spoken with Jesus. The Lord therefore explains to them that the voice came for their sakes, in order that, if possible, they might accept Him as their Savior even now yet, in the eleventh hour, and thus be saved. For in the events that were beginning now, and that would transpire in the next few days, they should know that a great judgment was taking place, that the universe was on trial. The time of Christ's suffering and death was the hour of decision for the whole world, and especially in this, that the prince of the world, the devil, would be cast out, conquered, and subdued. Through His Passion and death Christ took from the devil the right which he had assumed on account of the sins of mankind, namely, of keeping all men in subjection to him. By bearing the sins of the world and by effecting a complete reconciliation for them all, Jesus has taken away from the devil the power to keep men in his service. In this way the hour of the world's redemption is also the hour of decision, the hour of trial. In the end, the question will be whether men will stand by Christ, the Redeemer, or by Satan, the destroyer of their souls. To gain this great victory and eject the devil from his dominion, it was necessary that Jesus be lifted up from the earth, that He be

elevated on the cross. But the accursed tree in this case was transformed into a throne of victory and grace. Through His death on the cross He would make it possible for all men to be drawn to Him; the redemption would be complete; the reconciliation would be assured to all men without exception. The cross of Christ is the ladder between earth and heaven. Here is glorious comfort for every person in all the great wide world.

Walking in the Light. John 12, 34—41.

The necessity of believing in the Light: V. 34. **The people answered Him, We have heard out of the Law that Christ abideth forever; and how sayest Thou, The Son of Man must be lifted up? Who is this Son of Man?** V. 35. **Then Jesus said unto them, Yet a little while is the light with you. Walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you; for he that walketh in darkness knoweth not whither he goeth.** V. 36. **While ye have light, believe in the light, that ye may be the children of light. These things spake Jesus, and departed, and did hide Himself from them.** For once the people understood at least a part of the message which Jesus tried to convey to them; they comprehended that He was referring to His death. But now the Law, the Old Testament Scripture, contained some prophecies, Ps. 110, 4; Is. 9, 5; Dan. 7, 13. 14, which spoke of an eternal kingdom of the Messiah. The Jews could not make these statements agree with the words of Christ. And so they impatiently asked who this Son of Man was to whom He was always referring. It was true enough: Christ should abide forever, but not in an earthly, visible kingdom. Through His death He was to enter into this new life, in which He was to live and reign forever. Jesus did not answer their question directly, but gave them such instructions as would enable them to find out the truth for themselves. It would now be only a very short time that He, the Light of the World, would be with them. And therefore they should make the best use of this time. They should walk in this Light; they should give the rays from this wonderful Light an opportunity of shining into their hearts. If they would not receive light from this Light, then the darkness of their own heart and the destruction which follows it would remain for them. The man that travels in darkness is always in danger of losing his way and of landing in pitfalls. He that is without Christ, the true and only Light, is helpless in the midst of the thousands of spiritual dangers in these latter days. Therefore Jesus urges that the Jews believe in the Light, put their faith and trust in Him, their Savior. This faith would make them children of light, would give them the manner, the attributes of the true Light. They would then be filled with love toward God, with truth and righteousness, with all the virtues that characterize the true believer. This was the climax of Christ's sermon; He had again sent forth His call of grace; He had again invited them to partake of the blessings which He offered to them all. He now went away from them, He hid Himself after He had given the people the explanation recorded at the end of the chapter.

The fulfilment of Isaiah's prophecy: V. 37. **But though He had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on Him,** v. 38. **that the saying of Esaias the Prophet might be fulfilled, which he spake, Lord, who hath believed our report, and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed?** V. 39. **Therefore they could not believe, because that Esaias said again,** v. 40. **He hath blinded their eyes and hardened their heart, that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them.** V. 41. **These things said Esaias when he saw His glory and spake of Him.** The results of Christ's entire ministry, on the whole, had been very discouraging. Neither His words nor His miracles had had the desired result. And in this, as the evangelist here points out, the judgment of God upon unbelief was carried out. He refers to two Old Testament prophecies, both from the Book of Isaiah. In Is. 53, 1 the Messiah complains of the fact that His teaching is not believed, and that the arm of the Lord, as revealed in the miracles, is hidden from the multitude. And since the Jews thus, by their unbelief, opposed the gracious will of God in both Gospel and signs, the second prophecy, Is. 6, 9. 10, found its application and fulfilment. Their eyes were finally blinded, making it impossible for them to see; their heart was rendered callous to every good impression, making it impossible for them to understand the wonderful message of their salvation. The judgment upon the unbelieving Jews, which had begun in the days of the great prophet, was now finally consummated in the days of Christ. Cp. Matt. 13, 14; Mark 4, 12; Luke 8, 10; Acts 28, 26; Rom. 11, 8. It was rejection and contempt of the grace of God which characterized the attitude of the Jews: contempt in the days of Isaiah, contempt in the days of Christ, contempt in the days of the apostles; and so the judgment finally struck them in full force. It is a terrible thing for a person to reject and despise the grace of God when it is offered to him, for the time of mercy may soon be ended, and then comes the time when the Gospel will be unto such a person a savor of death unto death.

Of Faith in Christ and God. John 12, 42—50.

V. 42. **Nevertheless, among the chief rulers also many believed on Him, but because of the Pharisees they did not confess Him, lest they should be put out of the synagog;** v. 43. **for they loved the praise**

of men more than the praise of God. V. 44. Jesus cried and said, He that believeth on Me believeth not on Me, but on Him that sent Me. V. 45. And he that seeth Me seeth Him that sent Me. V. 46. I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on Me should not abide in darkness. V. 47. And if any man hear My words and believe not, I judge him not; for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world. V. 48. He that rejecteth Me, and receiveth not My words, hath one that judgeth him; the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day. V. 49. For I have not spoken of Myself; but the Father which sent Me, He gave Me a commandment what I should say and what I should speak. V. 50. And I know that His commandment is life everlasting; whatsoever I speak, therefore, even as the Father said unto Me, so I speak. In the form of a parenthesis the evangelist records a fact concerning some of the rulers of the Jews, members of the great council, the Sanhedrin. A few of these had gained the conviction that Jesus was the Messiah, for they could not deny the evidence of His words and works. But they had not yet reached that firmness of faith which manifests itself in open confession. They feared the Pharisees and their threats of excommunication; they loved the honor and glory from men more than that from God. And so the young plant of faith was almost immediately suffocated. Faith cannot grow or even be maintained in such a confined atmosphere. Note: This fate overtakes many a person in our days that fears the ridicule, the contempt, the persecution of the world. Faithfulness to Christ must not shrink from trials and persecutions, but stand firm and loyal on His side to the end.

The evangelist now records, in conclusion, the words which Jesus spoke to the people in leaving, a summary of all His discourses during the last days of His life, as they were addressed to the people in the Temple. He called out loudly, in order to call attention to His words and to strengthen the impression which He intended to make. Faith in Christ and faith in God is the same, for the two are one, and Jesus is His Father's ambassador. He that sees Christ with the eyes of faith thereby has a knowledge and understanding of the Father. Only through Christ and in the light of His work of redemption can the Father be known. Without Christ, the picture of God can at best be a caricature, resembling the ideas of the Gentiles concerning their highest God. Jesus has come into the world as the true Light, and not in the last instance to throw light upon the Father and upon His relation to mankind. While He enlightens the darkened minds of men, He shows them God as their Father, and enables them to believe in this Father with all their hearts. As a light Jesus came, and He that believes on Him leaves the darkness of unbelief and is filled with divine light. It is a matter of foolishness for any one to be a mere hearer of the Word and not to preserve and keep His sayings in a true heart. Such a person Christ will not judge; he has his judgment in himself. So far as Christ is concerned, His object in coming into the world was not to judge and condemn the world, but to save the world; He has no interest in the condemnation of men, but only in their everlasting salvation. But he that spurns Christ and repudiates His sayings, His Gospel, thereby condemns himself. And on the last day that same Word will prove his undoing. He will be told that he rejected the message which offered salvation to him freely, out of pure grace and mercy. So again it is not zeal for Himself and His honor which makes Jesus so insistent, but the eagerness to fulfil the commandment of His Father. Both His public and His private utterances were governed by this consideration. There is perfect agreement, absolute unity, between Father and Son. His commandment and God's commandment are identical; the one thing that God wants more than anything else for all men, and that He therefore wants all men to strive for, is eternal life. He has only one will, and that is His good and gracious will that all men should be saved. In this the will of the Son coincides exactly with the will of the Father. For that reason Jesus has been speaking and preaching and repeating His glorious message, because He wants all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of truth.

Summary. *Christ enters Jerusalem amid the acclaim of the people, after having been anointed at Bethany by Mary, He preaches of His glorification through His suffering and death, and urges men to have faith in Him and His Father.*

CHAPTER 13.

Jesus Washing the Disciples' Feet.

John 13, 1—20.

At the Passover meal: **V. 1. Now before the feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that His hour was come that He should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end. V. 2. And supper being ended, the devil having now put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray Him, v. 3. Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He was come from God, and went to God, v. 4. He riseth from supper, and laid aside His gar-**

ments, and took a towel and girded Himself. V. 5. **After that He poureth water into a basin, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith He was girded.** John introduces the story of the last evening of Christ's life in a very exact and impressive way. Jesus had spent the time since Tuesday evening at some place outside of the city, probably at Bethany. He had now returned to Jerusalem, where two of His disciples had prepared the Passover meal for Him and the apostles. The announcement or introduction to the feast had taken place. After the disciples had reclined about the table, Jesus, as the head of the household, had uttered the thanksgiving, or benediction, over the wine and the feast, Himself drinking the first cup. It was at this point, when the feast proper had not yet commenced, that the washing of hands (and feet) usually took place. The evangelist also characterizes the attitude of Jesus. The Lord knew, by virtue of His divine omniscience, that His hour had come, the last great hour of His life, the consummation of His destiny on earth. He must leave this world, in the state of His human nature, in which He had given His whole life as a sacrifice. His way of glorification would be through death, but away from this world to the Father, by resurrection and ascension. Love of those that were His own according to the will of His Father, that had been given Him as His peculiar and particular friends, had been the keynote of His entire bearing toward them all His life. And so He wanted to give these men, who were attached to Him as His friends in a most particular sense, evidence of His love to the very end. His love remained steadfast through all His suffering and in spite of all their lack of faith. Such is the Savior's love at all times toward His weak and erring children, a seeking, searching, enduring love. "How do these words agree with the story? Very fine; if one only pays close attention. For in that he says: Jesus knew that the hour was there for Him to go out of this world to the Father, he wants to awaken a special diligence that we should mark this work and the preaching that He does concerning it with all diligence, since the Lord, almost in the last hour, when He was to depart out of this life, wanted to proclaim this to us. Now this is certainly true: what our dearest friends say and do shortly before their end moves us more and goes more deeply into the heart than other things which they may have spoken or done during the time of their life. For when it comes to that point, then both scolding and joking is past with the dying, and what they then say or do comes from their heart and is their true, serious opinion. . . . It was now the time that the Lord should go from the world, the disciples, however, should remain there still longer; they had need of such example and instruction, if otherwise they wanted to remain His true disciples and not allow the example of the world to seduce them." 55) When supper had been served, when the meal proper was about to begin, Jesus did a peculiar thing. By this time the devil had not only suggested the betrayal to the heart of Judas, but had fully taken possession of his heart. Jesus, at the same time, was fully conscious, even as a mere human being, that the Father had given all things into His hands, cp. chap. 3, 35. Even in the state of humiliation God had given to Jesus the full measure of divine omnipotence. With His exaltation He then, as true man, entered upon the full and free use of His divine omnipotence and providence. But here the thought is most prominent that God had entrusted to Jesus the carrying out of the great counsel of love. In a way, the responsibility for the redemption of the whole world now rested upon Him alone. He had gone out from the Father with a full knowledge of the requirements governing the proposed atonement for the sins of the world, and He knew that He must bring His work to a successful close and, even as true man, go back into the bosom of the Father. It was not that Christ was looking forward into a hidden future; He was fully conscious and aware of all that would happen to Him. It is that fact which emphasizes the willingness of the Lord to enter upon the great Passion.

The evangelist, having thus brought out the dramatic intensity of the hour and its importance in the history of salvation, makes the action of Jesus under the circumstances stand out all the more prominently. He arose from the sofa upon which He was reclining for the meal, He took off His outer garments, since they would hinder Him in the work He intended to perform, He took a long linen cloth, or towel, and girded Himself with it, tying it around His waist after the manner of the servants performing the work. For His object was to perform the foot-washing. There being no slave present, the office would naturally fall to the lot of the humblest in the little circle. But these men, far from feeling humility at this time, started a quarrel as to who should be accounted the greatest, Luke 22, 23—27. The lesson was to be impressive and have a lasting effect, and it had, by the account of John, who noted every detail most carefully. Jesus put water into the basin which was commonly used for that purpose, and then very deliberately began to wash the feet of His disciples and to dry them with the towel with which He was girded.

The objection of Peter: V. 6. **Then cometh He to Simon Peter; and Peter saith unto Him, Lord, dost Thou wash my feet?** V. 7. **Jesus answered and said unto him, What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter.** V. 8. **Peter saith unto Him, Thou shalt never wash my feet.**

55) Luther, 13a, 317. 318.

Jesus answered him, If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with Me. V. 9. Simon Peter saith unto Him, Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head. V. 10. Jesus saith to him, He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit; and ye are clean, but not all. V. 11. For He knew who should betray Him; therefore said He, Ye are not all clean. It is a most realistic picture which the evangelist here draws: the Lord in the role of the humblest of servants, performing the work of the house-slave; the disciples sitting around in silent stupefaction, really unable to make anything of the entire matter. But Jesus went right on down the line, omitting none. When He came to Peter, however, He met with opposition. With his usual impetuousness, Peter declared, half in the form of a question, half in that of an emphatic statement: Lord, surely Thou shalt not wash my feet! It was a mixture of reverence and self-will which prompted Peter to make this declaration; he still lacked the true understanding of his Master in many respects. The Lord tells him, in return, that he did not know, did not understand at that time, what the real significance of Christ's humble task was. But the time would come when the meaning should be brought to him and the full realization given him. A part of the meaning Jesus explained to His disciples that very evening, but the full enlightenment did not strike them until after Pentecost. Note: This word of Jesus finds its application to the many and various vicissitudes of a Christian's life, when there is a tendency to stand in helpless confusion before some words and works of the Lord which are at the time beyond one's understanding. But there is always the comfort: whatever is not revealed and made clear to us in this life will be fully explained in the great hereafter, 1 Cor. 13, 9—12.

Still Peter was not satisfied. He asserts: To all eternity nevermore shalt Thou wash my feet! His love for his Master was apt to show itself in peculiar ways. But Jesus sternly rejoins: If I do not wash Thee, thou hast no part with Me. The evidence is clearly pointing to some connection with Christ not conditioned by the mere external washing. The act of Jesus was symbolical and represented the close union and communion between Christ and those that are His. Only he whom Christ washes and cleanses from sins can have part with Christ. Cp. Ps. 51, 4. This great benefit and blessing of the Lord, the cleansing from sins, the disciples did not realize and appreciate fully till after Pentecost. But Peter immediately became overenthusiastic and violently eager, desiring to have more than his share of the Lord's service, thinking it depended upon the extent of the outward washing, how close and certain the inward union and communion with Christ would be. But Jesus curbs his eagerness about having also his hands and his head washed. Since the washing was symbolical only, it was not necessary that the whole body be washed with water. He whom the cleansing and sanctifying power of Jesus in His redemption has touched is altogether clean and holy in the sight of God. His disciples were clean; they had, by faith, accepted the redemption in His blood. They were justified from their sins. And the sanctification of their lives must continue, as the washing of feet indicated; they must ever wash away and remove the filth of the sins that would persist in clinging to them and in soiling their flesh and their conscience. All believers have daily need of this cleansing from sins, it is necessary for them all to lay aside the sin which does so continually beset them, Heb. 12, 1. That is the significance of the washing of feet. And in making the declaration, Jesus deliberately makes one exception. One there was, the man that would betray Him, who was not clean, who had spurned the redemption and sanctification of his Savior, who had denied the faith completely by planning to deliver his Master into the hands of the unbelievers.

The application of the washing of feet to the disciples: **V. 12. So after He had washed their feet, and had taken His garments, and was set down again, He said unto them, Know ye what I have done to you? V. 13. Ye call Me Master and Lord; and ye say well; for so I am. V. 14. If I, then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, ye also ought to wash one another's feet. V. 15. For I have given you an example that ye should do as I have done to you. V. 16. Verily, verily, I say unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord; neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him. V. 17. If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them.** Jesus finished His self-imposed, deliberate task; He wanted it impressed upon the memories of the disciples. He then took His upper garments once more, He put them on, He reclined once more in His place as the head of the household. Then He broke the silence by asking them whether they had perceived the meaning of His action. The Lord's own action had been symbolical, but incidentally it served as an example which they should emulate. They gave Him the honoring title of Master or Lord, and He did not repudiate the appellation, but rather asserted His full right to bear these names. He is the great Lord, come from heaven; He is the great Teacher of all men, at all times. If He, therefore, did not consider Himself too good or too dignified to perform this humble service for them, they, in turn, should not hesitate about following His example. They are to apply His example to the acts of love and service which they owe to their neighbor. The reference is to all acts of kindness and charity, and, under circumstances, the very act which Jesus per-

formed for the disciples might well be included in that list, 1 Tim. 5, 10. But Jesus refers in general to all kindly acts in the care of fellow-Christians. For the Christians are His disciples, and therefore His willing, loving servants. Therefore, as Jesus very solemnly emphasizes, they, as servants, cannot be above the Master, neither can the ambassador or minister be greater than he that sent him. The humblest work of love for one's neighbor should be performed with all eagerness, for no disciple of Christ may presume to be above such works of merciful and kind service. If he does, he has none of the spirit of Christ living in him. Cp. Mark 10, 24; Luke 6, 40; 22, 27. Note: The application of these words to the spiritual field is unusually apt. The Christians are still living in the world, they are obliged to battle continually with their flesh and blood, and therefore sin will make its appearance. The greatest love and the spirit of Christ is shown in this, that one forgives his neighbor his daily trespasses, and endures his faults and frailties. And the Lord adds an earnest and searching word in the conclusion of this paragraph. Mere head knowledge of the wish and will of Jesus has no value in the kingdom of Christ. It is the application of knowledge expressed in actions which counts in the estimation of Jesus. The person that practises the love which has come into his heart by faith, in such deeds of mercy and charity and kindness as are shown in the Word of God, he will be truly happy, in the sense of being assured of the approbation of Christ.

Another allusion to Judas: V. 18. **I speak not of you all; I know whom I have chosen; but that the Scripture may be fulfilled, He that eateth bread with Me hath lifted up his heel against Me.** V. 19. **Now I tell you before it come, that, when it is come to pass, ye may believe that I am He.** V. 20. **Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that receiveth whomsoever I send receiveth Me; and he that receiveth Me receiveth Him that sent Me.** All the words of kindly admonition, all the promises of future blessings, were directed only to the true disciples, only to those whose faith was firmly grounded in Jesus, their Master and Savior. And the Lord here expressly makes an exception in the case of one man. He knew very well whom He had chosen; He was altogether aware of the significance of His every action. But in their very midst was one in whom the words of the prophet would be fulfilled: He that eats with Me bread has lifted up against Me his heel, Ps. 41, 9. It would be a man that had been in the utmost intimacy with the Savior, one that had been accepted into the inner circle of the apostles and intimates of the Lord, that would become guilty of the most fiendish and devilish crime that could be imagined, namely, of spurning the Lord that bought him with His holy blood. But herein would the Scripture be fulfilled. In that very fact, in the heinous crime of one member of the table-round, they would find confirmation of the fact that nothing was hidden from their Master. Thus they would be induced and encouraged to believe and trust in Him all the more firmly. That should strengthen them in their belief that Jesus was truly the Messiah that had been promised to the world. And so far as the true disciples were concerned, they should be perfectly assured in regard to their apostleship. He tells them that His messengers must be received with the deference and honor due Him, and that in a similar way those that receive Him and believe on Him thereby receive the Father. Every service rendered to any true servant of the Gospel is entered into the accounts of God as one rendered to Himself, and will receive its reward of mercy accordingly, on the last day. Cp. Matt. 10, 40; Luke 10, 16. There is an encouraging admonition here for the Christians of all times.

The Traitor at the Table. John 13, 21—30.

V. 21. **When Jesus had thus said, He was troubled in spirit, and testified, and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, that one of you shall betray Me.** V. 22. **Then the disciples looked one on another, doubting of whom He spake.** V. 23. **Now there was leaning on Jesus' bosom one of His disciples, whom Jesus loved.** V. 24. **Simon Peter therefore beckoned to him that he should ask who it should be of whom He spake.** V. 25. **He then, lying on Jesus' breast, saith unto Him, Lord, who is it?** V. 26. **Jesus answered, He it is to whom I shall give a sop when I have dipped it. And when He had dipped the sop, He gave it to Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon.** The reference which Jesus had just made to His betrayer affected Him very deeply. He was deeply moved in the spirit, with sorrow over the ingratitude and baseness of the wretch that would use the familiarity and knowledge of intimacy to betray Him. Purposely the Lord does not mention the name of the traitor, since Peter and some of the rest would undoubtedly have taken measures to prevent the crime by dealing summarily with the man that contemplated such an atrocity, but merely says, with solemn deliberateness: One of you will betray Me. It was a tense moment. The sorrow of Jesus was transmitted to His faithful disciples. Involuntarily they became suspicious of one another; a feeling of uncertainty, of doubt took hold of them; they did not dare to question one another's loyalty outright, and so the situation became very strained. Some of them began excitedly to whisper and to discuss the meaning of this revelation; others appealed to Jesus whether they were the guilty ones. But Peter wanted the satisfaction of finding out from Jesus. Since John, therefore, was reclining next to Jesus in such a way that his

head almost touched the breast of Jesus, and since this man, John, had the enviable distinction of enjoying the love of Christ in a special measure, Peter beckoned to him, making himself understood to him by some form of the sign language that he should get the information from Jesus. John, therefore, without attracting any attention, leaned over or moved more closely to Christ so that his head actually touched the chest of Jesus, and then softly asked Him, Lord, who is it? The Lord even now did not give the name of the traitor, but answered John, in the same confidential way, that it was he to whom He would give a morsel (of bread) which He was just then dipping into the sauce (*charoseth*), which was one of the dishes of the Passover meal. And suiting His action to His word, Jesus took the sop which He was just then dipping and gave it to Judas Iscariot. This incident revealed the traitor to John, and probably also to Peter. But as for the rest, it is probable that most of them did not notice the incident at the time, or did not attach any importance to it. For the entire matter was taken care of so quietly, almost secretly, that it attracted no attention from the rest of the table-round. Then, also, Judas dipped into the sauce at the same time that Jesus did, Mark 14, 20. He, of course, knew to whom Jesus had reference, but he was brazen-faced enough even to ask Jesus whether it was he that would perform the dastardly deed of betraying the Master, Matt. 26, 25.

The betrayal definitely decided upon: V. 27. **And after the sop Satan entered into him. Then said Jesus unto him, That thou doest, do quickly.** V. 28. **Now no man at the table knew for what intent He spake this unto him.** V. 29. **For some of them thought, because Judas had the bag, that Jesus had said unto him, Buy those things that we have need of against the feast, or that he should give something to the poor.** V. 30. **He, then, having received the sop, went immediately out; and it was night.** In all His dealings with Judas, in all the warnings which the Lord sounded, He still had the object of winning him from his way of sin and damnation, if possible. But in this crisis Judas decided the wrong way, he rejected the admonition of the Lord. After he had received the sop, the devil entered into him, took complete possession of his heart and mind, hardened both against the influence of Jesus, and forced Judas to do his will. That is the final result of yielding to evil influence in the first place; the ability to turn to good is lost, and in the crisis the devil steps in and takes hold of such a person as his own property. Now Jesus distinctly, so that all the disciples could hear it, told Judas to do as quickly as possible what he had in mind, what he intended to do. The traitor was not directing the turn of events, for this was altogether in the hands of Jesus; he was the devil's tool, but his devilish work resulted in the serving of God's plans. The fate of Judas was hereby decided; his heart was hardened; he was deserted by God forever: forever given into the will and submission of the devil. That is the terrible judgment which finally strikes the backslider, the apostate that denies the accepted truth: he is the tool and instrument of the devil to work his will, to commit one sin after the other, and finally to end in everlasting damnation. Though the disciples heard the order of Jesus to Judas, there was none of them in the table-round, not even John himself, that understood to what Jesus had reference. Since Judas was the treasurer of the disciples, some thought that he was to buy provisions for the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread, which was connected with the Passover, or for the *chagigah*, or meal of thanksgiving, which was celebrated on the 15th of Nisan, or that he was to take care of some poor people. Note: It seems that Jesus, in the midst of His great poverty, still took occasion to do good to the poor. Ways and means may always be found to make the mammon of unrighteousness work for the Lord. Immediately after Judas had received the sop at the hand of Jesus and had heard the remark which accompanied the action, he left the room. It was now about the time of the evening when twilight gave way to complete darkness, when night fell, about seven o'clock or somewhat later at that time of the year. Judas belonged to those that hate the light, that prefer the cover of darkness for their deeds. For that purpose he had left the upper room. There was night in him, and there was night about him; he was a child of darkness and damnation.

Concerning Christ's Glorification.

John 13, 31—38.

God glorified in the Son: V. 31. **Therefore, when he was gone out, Jesus said, Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in Him.** V. 32. **If God be glorified in Him, God shall also glorify Him in Himself, and shall straightway glorify Him.** V. 33. **Little children, yet a little while I am with you. Ye shall seek Me; and as I said unto the Jews, Whither I go ye cannot come; so now I say to you.** V. 34. **A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.** V. 35. **By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples, if ye have love one to another.** No sooner had Judas left the room than Jesus turned to His disciples with a series of beautiful, comforting sayings. They needed strength and consolation for the time of tribulation that would soon strike them. There is a note of triumph in the words of Jesus. In this crisis, by this decision of Jesus, the first step in His glorification has been accomplished. It is the Son of Man, the God-man, that has

been glorified through all the miracles of His life, and who is now to be glorified through the greatest miracle of all, following His death and burial. And God is glorified in the Son. It is God's salvation; God was in Christ; God would be the Cause and the Promoter of His glorification, which was thus bound to result in the Father's glorification as well. The Son having accomplished the work of salvation, the Father would receive the honor and glory for the resultant benefit for the whole world. But so close is the union between the Father and the Son that there is a mutual exchange of honor and glory between the two. That Jesus was glorified according to His human nature, that His human nature was received into the full enjoyment of the divine essence and attributes, that is an event which transpires within the essence of God. This act of glorification happened quickly, had its inception, took place, that very night. The Lord shows His disciples what relation this fact would have to them and their faith. Affectionately He calls them little children. He would be with them only a little while; the time could be numbered by hours now rather than by days. Then He would be taken from them, be removed from the intimate relationship which they had now enjoyed a matter of some three years. He had told the Jews that they would seek Him after it was too late, after all their searching for false Messiahs had been fruitless. In a similar manner He here tells the disciples that they will seek Him. The parting from their Lord would be a severe blow for them. But instead of abandoning hope, they should take heart, though they cannot follow Him now, at once. There is work for them to do before they may follow Him into the Kingdom of Glory. The necessity of true, fervent brotherly love had become apparent that night. They had known before that they should love all men as their neighbors; but here they are given a new commandment, that they should love one another. It was a kind of love which had not been practised up to that time, and is practised all too seldom in our days. The manifestation of brotherly love should be a sign, a criterion, whereby the people in the world in general might at all times recognize them as His disciples. The standard of this love, unapproachable indeed, but one worth striving after, as the most beautiful ideal in all the world, is the love of Jesus to them, to His disciples of all times. The climax and consummation of His love came with His giving His life as a ransom for many. That is the ideal which should ever be present in the minds of all Christians, that every one deny himself in the interest of brotherly love. When the Christians love one another fervently, with pure hearts, even unto death, then shall it fully appear that they are disciples of the Son of Man who laid down His life for His sheep, and who became, by dying, a ransom for all.

Peter's boast and the Lord's correction: V. 36. **Simon Peter said unto Him, Lord, whither goest Thou? Jesus answered him, Whither I go thou canst not follow Me now; but thou shalt follow Me afterwards.** V. 37. **Peter said unto Him, Lord, why cannot I follow Thee now? I will lay down my life for Thy sake.** V. 38. **Jesus answered him, Wilt thou lay down thy life for My sake? Verily, verily, I say unto thee, The cock shall not crow till thou hast denied Me thrice.** Peter was not yet altogether clear in his mind as to the glorification of his Master. That one thought had struck Peter's consciousness, that the Lord was going away, that He would be removed from them, and he wanted to know whither. Jesus patiently explained to Peter what He indicated to them all, that he could not accompany his Master now, but that he could and should follow later. It was necessary for Peter to learn many a lesson, to go through many an experience, to suffer and to labor for his Lord in many countries. He should therefore patiently wait until such a time as the Lord would call him to his eternal reward. But Peter was impetuous and impatient. Like a spoiled child he wanted to know the reason for being denied his desire. Right now he is willing, he proudly asserts, to lay down his life for his Master. That was no exhibition of strong faith, but a rash promise proceeding from the flesh. Let no man think he can do anything good without the assistance of Christ and God. The answering exclamation of Jesus sounds almost sarcastic: Thy life thou wouldst lay down for Me? The fact that without Christ he can do nothing had not yet been brought home to Peter. The prophecy of the Lord, accompanied as it was with the solemn words of emphasis, must have come to him as a distinct shock: The cock will not crow, the time of cock-crowing will not come this night, before thou hast denied Me thrice. These earnest words of Christ should have brought Peter to his senses; but he was too full of self-confidence and belief in his own powers to heed them earnestly, as he should have done. Every believer in Christ should earnestly examine himself in this respect, whether his love and faithfulness in Christianity depends merely upon his personal feeling or on the Word of the eternal God. Faithfulness unto death is possible only in the power of the Lord.

Summary. *Jesus washes the feet of His disciples at the Passover meal, makes the application of His action to them and to their circumstances, speaks words of warning concerning the traitor at the table, rejoices in His glorification, and rebukes the self-confidence of Peter.*

CHAPTER 14.

Of Christ's Going to the Father.

John 14, 1—14.

The comfort of Christ's going: V. 1. **Let not your heart be troubled; ye believe in God, believe also in Me.** V. 2. **In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.** V. 3. **And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto Myself, that where I am, there ye may be also.** V. 4. **And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know.**[56] The last speeches of Christ to His disciples, held partly in the upper room of the Passover feast, partly on the way to Gethsemane, are full of the most glorious cheer and comfort, whose value has in no wise suffered with the passing of time. There are few passages of Scriptures that are so replete with the merciful love of the Savior as these chapters. The very first words give the keynote of the entire discourse. Let not your hearts be troubled, excite themselves and you, fill you with anxiety and worry. The disciples, in that very night, would become witnesses of such agony and distress of soul as would make the stoutest heart quake and quail. And not only would their Master's suffering agitate their hearts, but they would eventually have to follow in His steps, though not in the same degree. So they were in need of comfort and assurance from the mouth of their Lord. "But this is written not for their sakes, but for us, that we may learn to make use of this comfort for present and future trouble, and that every Christian, when he has been baptized and has placed himself in Christ's care, may and should yield to it and certainly expect that he will also meet with terror and fear which will make his heart weak and despondent, whether it be through one or various enmities and oppositions."[57] But in this emergency the apostles and all disciples should trust God, yea, they should trust Christ as well, and in the same degree. They should put their trust in the almighty Father above, whose providence has ever watched over them. And if He should seem to them too distant and inaccessible, they should rely absolutely upon Him, their Master, who has ever, and in all emergencies, been their true Friend and Helper. Their trust in God would not be misplaced, nor should it lack firmness, for the Mediator between God and man was sitting before them, through whom God is reconciled to all men. "Let others trust in, and boast of, their temporal power and fortune, you, however, comfort yourselves that you have a God, and know Him, and depend upon it that He is with you and can help you, as He has promised through the Word, and surely will not fail you, although everything be against you, but will assist, protect, and help you out, since you suffer all things for His sake."[58] To emphasize the comfort of these assurances, the Lord reminds His disciples that in His Father's house there is room not only for Himself, but for them all, that they should have no harm on account of His leaving, but know that it was done for their benefit, that He wants to prepare and order their habitations with the Father, and that He wants to come back Himself to fetch them to the mansions, in order that they may occupy these habitations and remain where He is, thus having the certainty of both, of the mansions in heaven and of Christ Himself for all eternity.[59] The mansions are there even now, by the love of the Father; but the trust in the Savior will bring them into the possession of all believers. As children of God, through faith in Jesus, they have a right and a part in the home of the Son. And Jesus, having made all preparations for their reception and eternal entertainment, will not leave His disciples to find their way above as best they can, but will complete His labor of love by coming again and receiving them to Himself and taking them along with Him to the places of their everlasting stay. There is the true home and fatherland of the Christians, in heaven with the Lord, where He wants them to be, in glorious, wonderful communion and union with Him. After the tedious and laborious pilgrimage of earth they there become partakers of the rest of the Lord. Heaven is the home of every Christian, just as soon as he has finished his earthly life. Jesus comes personally and guides the weary wanderer's footsteps to everlasting joy and blessedness. Jesus reminds His disciples that they knew both His goal and the way to that goal, the eternal home. He had given them the necessary information so often and in so complete a manner that they all should have had full knowledge, blessed assurance. Heaven is Christ's eternal home, as it is ours; and the way to heaven leads through Him, since faith in His redemption opens the portals of heaven.

An interruption by Thomas: V. 5. **Thomas saith unto Him, Lord, we know not whither Thou goest; and how can we know the way?** V. 6. **Jesus saith unto him, I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life; no man cometh unto the Father but by Me.** V. 7. **If ye had known Me, ye should have known My Father also; and from henceforth ye know Him, and have**

56) The explanation of John 14—17, as given by Luther, 8, 264—843, is indispensable to any one that wants to make a thorough study of the Lord's last discourses.

57) Luther, 8, 269.

58) Luther, 8, 278.

59) Luther, 8, 292.

seen Him. Thomas was but expressing the thoughts of the majority of the disciples; he acted, in a way, as their mouthpiece. So firmly and completely were their hearts and minds bound up with the matters of this world and with their hopes of a temporal reign of the Messiah that even now they did not understand the references of the Lord. It was necessary almost to pry their thoughts loose from this world. Thomas protested that they did not even know the object and goal of the Master's going; and how could they possibly know the way? The question sounds so foolish that it is well to remember what one commentator remarks: The disciples knew, but they did not know that they knew. Sorrow had benumbed their spiritual faculties. With infinite patience, therefore, the Lord gives them a brief summary of all His teaching. Christ is the Way to God and to heaven; not merely a leader and guide; He bears, He carries them that are His, that trust in Him; He brings them safely to the home above. Christ is the Truth: His every Word may be trusted implicitly, for it teaches the knowledge of God, and directs the way; the way which He teaches is the only right way, for He is the absolute Truth. Christ is the Life: He is the Fountain and Giver of all true life, the life that animates all those that believe on Him, and that is to be enjoyed eternally at the end of the way. He that believes on Him has eternal life, is indissolubly united with God, so far as God's will and intention are concerned. These things being true, it follows that no man can come to the Father, attain to the enjoyment of eternal bliss, but by and through Jesus. There is no other way, all those that are devised by men, the ways of good works and self-righteousness, being false paths, that lead to everlasting destruction. Jesus is the only Way to heaven. "This, I believe, is what the second word, 'truth,' means in all simplicity, that Christ is not only the Way in the beginning, but the true, certain way, and alone will finally remain the Way to which one must ever adhere, and not let the wrong path deceive that would entice us to seek something beside Christ that should help us to salvation." 60) Jesus adds, by way of a gentle rebuke: If ye had known Me, ye should have known the Father. Their knowledge was not yet so deep and complete as it well might have been. The Father is in Jesus, and to know Him is to know the Father, chap. 10, 30. The disciples had therefore seen the Father, who is revealed in the Son, with the eyes of faith, by which they had received Christ. "He that sees Christ with eyes 'in faith' by that same process of seeing also sees the Father; for he touches that Person in whom the Father (also bodily, as St. Paul says, Col. 2, 9) lives, and reveals all His heart and will. Thus we also see and know both Him and the Father, although not with eyes, nor through bodily seeing and knowing, but through that very faith." 61)

An interruption by Philip: **V. 8. Philip saith unto Him, Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us. V. 9. Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known Me, Philip? He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou, then, Show us the Father? V. 10. Believest thou not that I am in the Father and the Father in Me? The words that I speak unto you I speak not of Myself; but the Father that dwelleth in Me, He doeth the works. V. 11. Believe Me that I am in the Father and the Father in Me; or else believe Me for the very works' sake.** The remark of Philip, requesting to be shown the Father, in order that he might see Him with the eyes of his body, showed just as much spiritual denseness and blindness as that of Thomas. His words imply that such a demonstration would be all that was necessary to establish their faith for always. Jesus makes His reproof very gentle, but repeats, in substance, the arguments which He had used in the case of the unbelieving Jews. For so long a time Jesus had been with the disciples, and yet Philip had not gained the proper and complete knowledge of Him. The manifestation which Philip desired had been made for as long a time as He had been in the company of Jesus, for seeing Christ in faith is identical with seeing the Father. It was a matter of surprise and regret to Jesus that Philip needed to be told this great truth once more, in order to correct his foolish notion of a physical, sensible demonstration of the Father. In the tone of intimate, loving admonition, which Jesus used throughout the last discourses, He continues His instruction. If He had put the question directly whether the disciples believed that He was in the Father and the Father in Him, the answer of Philip would undoubtedly have been positive. Philip should therefore consider that the words of Christ are not His own, just as His works are not His own, are not performed separately from the Father. The Father is and remains in Him from everlasting to everlasting. Jesus is the eternal Son, the eternal Logos. He that sees, hears, takes hold of, the man Jesus Christ incidentally sees, hears, and takes hold of God the Father. The essence of the Father and of the Son is the same, identical. What this man Jesus speaks with His human lips, that is the speaking, the voice of God. And he that refuses to believe the words has the additional, unquestionable testimony of the works, the great miracles. The omnipotence of God was revealed to man in the person of Jesus Christ. Every Christian that reads and studies his Bible in the right way and hears the preach-

60) Luther, 8, 313.

61) Luther, 8, 328.

ing of the Gospel, hears and sees God Himself, is a witness of the great miracles. The belief in the Son is identical with the belief in the Father. The fact of the union between Father and Son cannot be doubted, the manner can never be adequately explained. Jesus repeats before His disciples what He had told the unbelieving Jews some time before, to impress it upon their minds, chap. 10, 38. On account of His works, which are evidently divine, they should believe, if they refused to believe His mere words.

The promise of greater works: V. 12. **Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on Me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do, because I go unto My Father.** V. 13. **And whatsoever ye shall ask in My name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.** V. 14. **If ye shall ask anything in My name, I will do it.** In connection with the mention of works which He was performing to testify in His own behalf, Jesus here gives His disciples of all times a glorious promise of works which they should do in their office as His ministers. Most solemnly He assures them, and comforts them by the assurance, that every believer in Him would be enabled to perform the same works that He had done, and even greater works than He had performed before them. The apostles and the disciples, especially of the early Church, performed miracles like those of Christ; they healed the diseased, they cast out demons, they raised the dead; and all this to testify to the truth of their teaching. Every believer in Christ is, however, by that token, filled with power from on high not only to testify of Christ, but, in so doing, to do greater signs than the Master Himself, namely, to awaken men from spiritual death. To convert sinners, to rescue lost and condemned men from damnation, that is a greater, a more important miracle than healing from bodily infirmities and awakening from temporal death. Not as though Jesus had not converted men by His preaching. But the great work of the New Testament, the gathering of the Christian Church through the preaching of the Gospel, did not really begin until after Pentecost. And the reason why the believers can perform these great works of saving souls is found in the fact that Jesus is going to the Father. Also according to His human nature He will then make constant use of His divine power and majesty, and will be able to impart to the believers in Him this wonderful power which He here promises them. The great works of converting sinful men are in reality works of the exalted Christ. And in case the disciples, the believers, at any time feel their own weakness and inability to perform the great works which have been given to them, they should merely ask, they should bring the matter to His attention; He will attend to the rest. He fixes no limit in giving this promise except that the prayer must be made in His name, which excludes all sinful and arrogant petitions. Jesus hears every true prayer, but in His own manner and at His own time. And by doing so, since the Father works in Him, the Father is glorified in the Son. The final purpose of all the great works which Jesus promises to His believers is the glory of God. But He repeats His promise to hear their prayers; for the repetition is intended to impress the great truth upon them more strongly. Note: The fact that a Christian's prayer must be made in the name of Jesus cannot be emphasized too often. Only such prayers are acceptable as are made in faith in the Redeemer, the one Person whose complete atonement has given us the right to address God as our Father, and as are made in the name of the exalted Son of Man, whose providence and rule now extends over the whole world.

Of Love and Life. John 14, 15—24.

The coming of the Comforter: V. 15. **If ye love Me, keep My commandments.** V. 16. **And I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter that He may abide with you forever,** v. 17. **even the Spirit of Truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth Him not, neither knoweth Him. But ye know Him; for He dwelleth with you and shall be in you.** The prerequisite and condition for the continuance of the loving relationship between Christ and His followers is this, that they show their love toward Him by keeping His commandments. Where there is no faith, there is no love; and where there is no love, there can be no real keeping of the Lord's commandments. And the greatest commandment is this, that the Christians keep His Word, accept the Word of the Gospel in true faith, and cling to it with all their hearts. But if this condition obtains, then the Lord will pray the Father for a most unusual and wonderful gift for them. This gift is nothing less than another Comforter. Jesus Himself had been a Comforter to the disciples while He was with them. He had been their Friend, their Helper, and their Guide. But now His bodily presence would be removed from them, and they were as badly in need of a Strengthener and Comforter as ever. Jesus had been with them only a short period of time, but the other Comforter would abide with them always, would be the constant source and fountain of strength of all believers at all times. In the great work which is entrusted to the Christians and in the midst of all the trials and temptations of the world, they need some one upon whom they can depend absolutely for aid and comfort. This Comforter is the Spirit of Truth, the Holy Spirit, who never misleads nor deceives the disciples of Jesus. The truth which He teaches, wherewith He cheers and sustains the hearts of the believers, is the Gospel and its wonderful content: God

in Christ. "Here we learn and note that He is called a Comforter, and that for our sakes. For in His Godhead He is with the Father and the Son in one undivided divine essence; but for us He is called a Comforter, so that this name is nothing less than a revelation of what we should think of the Holy Ghost, namely, that He is a Comforter. But 'Comforter' no Moses or one that urges the Law is called, who terrifies with devil, death, and hell, but He that makes a sorrowful heart full of laughter and rejoicing toward God and bids thee be of good cheer, as one to whom his sins are forgiven, death strangled, heaven opened, and God Himself smiling upon thee." 62) This Spirit is the special strength and help of the disciples, by confirming them in the truth and enabling them to win victories through the truth of the Word. This Comforter, whom the believers will welcome so joyfully, the world cannot receive, cannot accept with His gifts. The unbelievers refuse to see and to know the Spirit and His Work. The enmity toward God which is found in their hearts robs them of all sensibility in spiritual, divine matters, 1 Cor. 2, 14. If they do make an attempt to fathom the mysteries of God from the standpoint of their enmity, they only increase their spiritual denseness. Only the believers know the Spirit, are on terms of intimate understanding with Him, for He remains in their heart by faith, and His testimony in their hearts produces an absolute conviction as to the certainty of their faith. As soon as a person receives faith and thus becomes a disciple, the Spirit takes possession of his heart and makes His abode with Him. And the knowledge and understanding of the Spirit and His work grows in the believer from day to day. Note that the three persons of the Godhead are spoken of in this section: the Son as praying to the Father, and the Father as sending the Comforter, the Holy Spirit.

Further encouragement: V. 18. **I will not leave you comfortless; I will come to you.** V. 19. **Yet a little while and the world seeth Me no more; but ye see Me. Because I live, ye shall live also.** V. 20. **At that day ye shall know that I am in My Father, and ye in Me, and I in you.** The Lord repeats His comforting assurance from another angle. He promises not to leave His disciples orphans, without a guide, deprived of all comfort. In addition to the fact that He will provide the Comforter for them, He Himself will not abandon them and leave them to the fate of children bereft of their parents. It may seem to them that His departure means as much, but because of this very fact that He is entering into His glory, He will be able to be present with them just as surely as before, and for all times. He will return to them in the means of grace, where His presence is always certain, and He will shortly return to them in person. It is but a little while, and the world, the unbelieving, hostile children of unbelief, would see Him no more, neither with the eyes of the body nor with those of the spirit. But His disciples would and will see Him, the eyes of their understanding being enlightened; they would understand Him, His person and work, better than ever before. For with His resurrection His human body would enter into a new mode of existence, His mortal body would be transfused with divinity, it would be transfigured for all times. Jesus lives, and they shall live. When Christ comes to them in the spirit and they learn to know and understand Him better with each new day, then they become partakers of the new spiritual life of Jesus. They will also understand more and more what that wonderful union and communion means which obtains between Father and Son, between the believers and Christ. And the day will come when the last shred of the veil will be taken from their eyes, and they will know their Savior and the mystery of the Triune God even as they are known. In the mean time they should rest assured that the relation between the Savior and the believers is just as intimate and blessed as that between the Father and the Son. The presence of Jesus in the believers assures them of the fulness of both His grace and power in them, grace and mercy for their sins and power for their sanctification.

The effects of the mystical union: V. 21. **He that hath My commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me; and he that loveth Me shall be loved of My Father, and I will love him, and will manifest Myself to him.** V. 22. **Judas saith unto Him, not Iscariot, Lord, how is it that Thou wilt manifest Thyself unto us and not unto the world?** V. 23. **Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love Me, he will keep My words; and My Father will love him, and We will come unto him, and make Our abode with him.** Not the having only, but the keeping of the commandments of Christ is an evidence and proof of faith. For the love of Christ, which grows from faith, is a principle prompting obedience. There must be evidence and expression of faith by observing the commandments of Christ in life. But where a person is found with such proofs of the faith of his heart, he would receive a wonderful proof and manifestation of the love of both Father and Son. The love of the Father will rest upon, be communicated to, such a one. And Jesus Himself will show the greatness of His love by appearing and manifesting Himself to the believer as the Son of God and the Savior of the world. This is a most comforting promise. For a believer does not always live and move in blissful emotions, but is troubled more or less often by doubts concerning His salvation and other matters pertaining to His Christian life. In such cases,

62) Luther, 8, 394.

however, he must cling firmly to the Word and its promises, continue his work for Christ with undiminished vigor, and know that Christ is his Savior in spite of all attacks. Judas Jacobi here interrupted the Master. He had understood so much from the exposition of Jesus that the hope of the disciples for a temporal Messianic kingdom would not be realized. He wanted to know now why Christ intended to manifest Himself only to His believers, and not to the whole world, perhaps in the form of a conquering hero. Judas (Lebbaeus or Thaddaeus) had always held that opinion concerning Messianic glory that it would be in the nature of a great demonstration, with much display of temporal power. He could not understand what had prompted Jesus to determine it otherwise. Once more Jesus, therefore, patiently explains. It is impossible for Him to reveal Himself to the world, because the world rejects Him and His Word. But if any man, filled with true faith toward Him, now also shows his faith in love, the proof will be found in the fact that he keeps His Word, that he clings to the Gospel of grace and mercy. To him Jesus and the Father will come, in him They will make Their abode, through the Spirit; his house and table Companions They will be forever. That is the mystery and the beauty of the mystical union. The Triune God Himself, personally, lives in the hearts of the believers, not only with some manifestation of His power and strength, but with His actual essence. There is no need for the Christian to sigh longingly for the union with the Triune God in heaven, for His throne is also right here on earth, wherever His Word is preached and He enters into the hearts of the believers. That is a blessed mystery and a glorious fact.

Of the Work of the Spirit. John 14, 24—31.

V. 24. **He that loveth Me not keepeth not My sayings; and the word which ye hear is not Mine, but the Father's which sent Me.** V. 25. **These things have I spoken to you, being yet present with you.** V. 26. **But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in My name, He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.** If there is no love for Christ in the heart of a man, because faith never found entrance into that heart, then there can be no keeping of His words; and if not of His, then neither of His Father's, whose words He was teaching, who had sent Him. Without the love toward Christ which grows out of faith there can be no really good works; all the works of unbelievers which have the appearance of keeping the words of Christ are "splendid vices," with which they deceive others and often themselves. Jesus, having now promised the Comforter to His disciples, having given the assurance also that He Himself would come and reveal Himself to His disciples and that He, with the other persons of the Godhead, would make His abode with the believers, tells them also what special work the Spirit would do in their case. He had spoken many things to them during His ministry, and especially in the last days, whose importance and significance they had not grasped. Therefore that same Comforter, the Holy Ghost, whom the Father would send in His name, would serve as their teacher, giving them the understanding of all things which they still had in memory, and recalling to their minds such things as they had forgotten. Note: The Father sends the Spirit, but in the name of Jesus; the same intimate relation between the Father and the Son again appears. Because Jesus is exalted to the right hand of God and is acting as the Advocate of mankind with the Father, for that reason the Spirit is sent in His name. That was the assurance which comforted and encouraged the apostles, and which serves also for our comfort. For with such a promise to back them up in their teaching, we know that the apostles could not fail in their proclamation of the great truths of God. We may rely without the slightest hesitation and doubt upon the words that were written by the apostles or under their direction, knowing that the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of the Father and the Son, directed and inspired them.

The gift of peace: V. 27. **Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you; not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.** V. 28. **Ye have heard how I said unto you, I go away and come again unto you. If ye loved Me, ye would rejoice because I said, I go unto the Father; for My Father is greater than I.** V. 29. **And now I have told you before it come to pass, that, when it is come to pass, ye might believe.** V. 30. **Hereafter I will not talk much with you; for the prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in Me.** V. 31. **But that the world may know that I love the Father, and as the Father gave Me commandment, even so I do. Arise, let us go hence.** This was the last talk of Jesus with His disciples, the last opportunity for speaking with them at length. And so He made a verbal request. He not only said His farewell by wishing them the blessings of peace, but He actually gave them, bequeathed to them as their possession, the peace which He was about to earn for them through His suffering and death, peace with God through His blood, Rom. 5, 1. This was not a peace after the manner of the world, a mere external, temporal blessing. It is a peace which will insure quietness and security in the midst of turmoil and trouble. It will take the terror out of the hearts of the believers, even when the enemies are threatening murder and every form of abuse. The person that has the peace of a

good conscience in the full assurance of God's grace and mercy will be unmoved in the midst of upheavals that threaten the very foundations of the universe, Ps. 46. And Jesus testifies to the disciples that His announcement of His going away, far from filling their hearts with sorrow, should rather redound to their joy. Sorrow and grief in this case are indications of selfishness and a lack of understanding of His purpose in leaving them for a time. The Master is going to His Father, and that Father is greater than He in His present form, in the person and in the guise of a servant. By going to the Father, He will be given the full use of the divine power and majesty. And the benefit of this would come to them in a very short time. He could then give them a much better protection, care for His whole Church in a much better way than at present. And all of these things the Lord told His disciples in advance, for the fulfilment of the prophecy would tend to confirm their faith; and in the mean time, when all things seemed to speak against the fact of Christ's divinity, they would have the certainty of this promise as an anchor for their faith.

But the time was passing by rapidly; Jesus must make His conversation brief. The hour of His Passion is drawing near; the prince, the ruler of this world, the devil, is preparing for his onslaught. The Lord must die on the cross, after having been delivered into the hands of the heathen. But Satan, though he comes in the treachery of Judas, could not prevail. There was no sin in Jesus according to which the devil might have claimed Him as his subject; there was no cause of death in Him. In Jesus there was nothing which the devil could call his own, nothing which he could claim as his and thus use for his purposes. And therefore also the devil, with all his cunning and power, would not be able to carry out his evil design, to conquer the Lord. He Himself is innocent, and will therefore, by His vicarious sacrifice, be able to reconcile the world to God. His work, His Passion, will stand before the world as an evidence of His love toward the Father and as a proof of His total fulfilment of all commandments concerning the redemption of mankind. — At this point Jesus interrupted His discourse only long enough to suggest their leaving the upper room, where the Passover meal had been held. The various Hallel Psalms had been sung before, after the close of the meal, which John does not describe.

Summary. *Jesus speaks to His disciples of His going to the Father, of the evidences of love toward Him in the believers, and of the work of the Holy Spirit.*

CHAPTER 15.

Christ the True Vine. John 15, 1—10.

The Husbandman, the Vine, and the branches: **V. 1. I am the true Vine, and My Father is the Husbandman. V. 2. Every branch in Me that beareth not fruit He taketh away; and every branch that beareth fruit, He purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit. V. 3. Now ye are clean through the Word which I have spoken unto you. V. 4. Abide in Me and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself except it abide in the vine, no more can ye except ye abide in Me. V. 5. I am the Vine, ye are the branches; he that abideth in Me and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit; for without Me ye can do nothing.** Whether the Lord spoke these words in the courtyard of the house in which He had celebrated the Passover with His disciples, or on the way through the valley of the Kidron, is immaterial. In this section of His discourse He combines parable and application in a very impressive manner. He wants to make clear to His disciples the relation which He holds to those that are called to continue His work. In the great garden, or vineyard, of the world, Jesus is the true Vine, planted there by His heavenly Father according to the eternal counsel of salvation. God the Father Himself is the Husbandman, the Gardener, and He is actively and solicitously concerned about the growth of the Vine. The Vine-dresser takes an unceasing interest in every phase of the Vine's condition, and in every branch that buds forth from the main stem. Every one of the annual shoots of the Vine that is fruitless, that shows no indication of becoming a bearing branch, the Vine-dresser takes away, cuts off the stem; and every shoot that is bearing the Gardener cleans very carefully, by removing all suckers, by pruning away all unnecessary buds that sap the vigor of the branch. The object is to have each branch yield the richest possible results. Jesus now makes the application to His disciples. They are clean, free from inward stain, they are in the condition of good branches, ready to yield fruit; and that through the Word, on account of the Word which Jesus has spoken to them, which He had taught them during His ministry. This Word of the Gospel made them clean; it renewed, it converted them; it made them true branches of Christ. "He says plainly: Through the Word are ye clean which I have spoken to you; that is nothing else than the entire preaching of Christ, as He was sent into the world by the Father, in order to pay for our sins through His suffering and death and to reconcile the Father, that all who believe on Him might not be lost nor condemned, but for His sake have forgiveness

of sins and eternal life (John 3, 16). This Word makes a person clean (where it is received into the heart by faith), that is, it brings forgiveness of sins and makes acceptable before God, that for the sake of that faith, by which alone such Word is accepted and adhered to, we that cling thereto are reckoned and considered altogether pure and holy before God, though we, on account of our nature and life, are not clean enough, since sin, weakness, and frailties, which are still to be cleansed, always remain in us as long as we live on earth." 63) It is necessary therefore, as Christ here urges, that His disciples strive to remain in the condition to which the grace of God has elevated them. They must keep their hold on Him by faith and in trust. And He will then, in turn, abide in them, will supply them with divine power and energy. The branches are active indeed, but only through the power which they have received from the stem. Just as soon as a branch is taken away from the vine, its ability to bear fruit is ended. Even so, just as soon as a disciple severs his connection with Christ, which is maintained by faith, through the Word, he ceases to be in a condition in which he can bring forth fruit well-pleasing to God. Jesus is the Vine, the believers are the branches. While they abide in Him, while His strength flows into them every day and hour, through the Spirit, in the Word, so long they can bring forth fruit in abundance. But let that connection be severed, let the hold of faith be broken, then all good works are a thing of the past. Without Christ, without His power and life, outside of Christ and His strengthening Spirit, there is no possibility of real spiritual work of any kind. The result in such cases, even with the best of intentions, is nothing in the sight of God. In their own strength, by their own power, the believers cannot think, desire, speak, perform anything good. Christ works the doing of the good through the power of the Word.

The earnest application: V. 6. **If a man abide not in Me, he is cast forth as a branch and is withered; and men gather them and cast them into the fire, and they are burned.** V. 7. **If ye abide in Me and My words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.** V. 8. **Herein is My Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be My disciples.** V. 9. **As the Father hath loved Me, so have I loved you; continue ye in My love.** V. 10. **If ye keep My commandments, ye shall abide in My love; even as I have kept My Father's commandments, and abide in His love.** Ten times in these ten verses is the necessity of abiding in Christ emphasized, the need of keeping a firm hold on the Savior by love. So much depends upon that fact that every believer, having once been implanted into the true Vine, maintain his close connection. For if any one does not remain in Christ, the consequences are disastrous. He is thrown out as a useless branch, for he is withered. There can be no dead wood lying about in the vineyard of God's Church; so all the dead branches are heaped on a pile and thrown into the fire, and it burns. According to the common usage in such cases, there is inevitable and complete destruction for the dead branches. Every person that does not remain in Christ, after once having gained the saving knowledge, thereby becomes a dead member. He cuts off his own supply of spiritual life and power. And as for real fruit, actual good works, he no longer is able to perform them. There may be some Christian show and semblance, but the reality of Christian virtue is lost. "So long as the branch remains rooted in the stem or stock and its sap and power remains in him, his fruits must be and remain good, though they may in some way be stung by a worm or be attacked by caterpillars or some other vermin. Thus also, if a man abides in Christ and receives and keeps energy and power from Him by faith, that Jesus works in him with His power and the gifts of the Holy Spirit, then the remaining weakness, which is incited by the devil and this sinful nature, will do no harm, only that he oppose such weakness with the continual battle of faith and sweep out such vermin. But if thou wouldst give up the doctrine of faith or subvert it and, leaving Christ, depend upon thine own sanctity, or publicly live in sin and shame, and yet glory in the Gospel and in the Christian name: then thou shalt know that thou art a false branch and hast no part in the Vine, but, cast out and condemned with wood and fruits, belongest to eternal hell-fire." 64) But to those that abide in Jesus, or, what is identical with that condition, to those that abide in the Word of the Lord, a further beneficial effect and result of that blessed intimacy is the hearing of prayer by Jesus and the Father. By means of His teaching, of His Gospel, Jesus abides in His disciples, and by the power of that same Word they are enabled to bear fruit which is acceptable to Him. But this same relationship also teaches them to pray in the proper manner. For the words: You may pray what you will, are not to be taken in an absolute sense, in the sense of arbitrary choice. The relation of the believers to Christ precludes such an understanding. The prayer of Christians will always be made in the way of love and of God's Word, in accordance with the new life which governs their every thought and action. Such prayers are the expression of the intimacy between Christ and His disciples, and are heard as a matter of natural consequence. For by this granting of prayer, flowing out of the intimate rela-

63) Luther, 8, 504.

64) Luther, 8, 516.

tionship between Christ and the believers, the Father is glorified. And the result is a strengthening of the bonds of love, an increase in the amount and in the quality of the good works, and a confirming of discipleship. The obedience of Christians is not a galling servitude, but a cheerful, joyful expression of their love. The same measure of love that the Father has toward the Son the latter has toward His own, and so the union and intimacy is a most perfect one, and should be kept by all means. Every person that abides in the love which Christ has for him and for the whole world is safe by reason of that love. But this abiding is done and accomplished by keeping and observing the commandments of Jesus; this brings the full possession and enjoyment of Christ's love. Just as Christ kept the will of His Father and carried it into execution, so the Christians will naturally find their delight in observing all the commandments, all the sayings of their Master, above all that one concerning the clinging to the Word of the Gospel as the one Word of salvation. This abiding in Christ, in the Word of the Gospel, faithfulness in confessing, is the result and working of God's grace. He that began the good work in us by planting us into the true Vine, Jesus Christ, will also perform it until the great day of glory.

The New Status of Christ's Disciples.

John 15, 11—27.

The joy of the Christians: V. 11. **These things have I spoken unto you that My joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full.** V. 12. **This is My commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you.** V. 13. **Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.** V. 14. **Ye are My friends if ye do whatsoever I command you.** The parable of the Vine and the branches with its application had a definite object, namely, that the joy which Christ has enjoyed, which is His in a peculiar sense, may be in His disciples, may become their property, their special and cherished possession. The great joy of His life He found in the intimate communion with His Father, with whom He is united in one essence, in the consciousness of the Father's love, and in the observance of His will. If this same mind would be found in the disciples, they would feel the same joy, they would rejoice in the constant communion with Christ and God. And by the same token their joy would be fulfilled, they would have the full measure of joy, of bliss which could not be taken from them. This joy, attained by the consciousness of their union with their Savior, will then also work willingness to fulfil the commandment of love, that the brotherly love among them should be so full and so perfect as Christ's love toward the believers is full and perfect. And in order to emphasize utter unselfishness and forgetfulness of self as the keynote in the manifestation of true love, He gives them an instance, a specific case of love's highest proof. A greater love than this love has no man, that he give and lay down his life for his friends. This general truth had a very specific application in the case of Jesus: He laid down His life for those whom He had chosen as His friends. And in His case the idea of ransom, of substitution, stands out very prominently. In the place of, in the stead of, the guilty ones He gave His own life, thus delivering them from the consequences of deeds which they should have borne. "That is called a great, powerful love if a man gives to another in his misfortune a hundred or a thousand dollars, or pays all his debts for him; but how great would that be if a king or a prince would give to a poor beggar a duchy or principality, yea, even his own kingdom or land and people? There the whole world would sing and say of unheard-of love. But that is only a small matter when compared with this, that Christ gives His life and body for thee, which is indeed the highest love that any man on earth can show to another; for to serve with money and goods, yea, also with the body, is also called loving. But there is none that would not much rather give his money and goods, yea, his land and people, than that he should die for another; and if he did it, it would be nothing beside that fact that God's Son comes down from heaven and steps forth in thy place, and willingly sheds His blood and dies, though thou hast been His enemy and a condemned person. That is the love which is much greater and higher than heaven and earth and everything that might be named." 65) This application of the great truth Christ makes Himself. His disciples are His friends, if the evidence of their works in performing His commandments indicates the faith of their hearts. He looked upon them as His friends for whom He intended to die; but they, in turn, should show and practise self-denial in loving and serving their neighbors, one another. Note: It is a name which honors the Christians very highly, to be called the friends of Jesus, the Savior, and to have such wonderful evidence of Christ's friendship in His death.

The meaning of Christ's friendship: V. 15. **Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth; but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of My Father I have made known unto you.** V. 16. **Ye have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in My name, He may give it you.** This new character of the disciples the Lord explains more fully. He makes the distinction between servants and friends.

65) Luther, 8, 551.

A servant does not know what his master is doing; He receives orders to carry out an allotted task, but has no idea what the object of the master may be in assigning it; he has no personal interest in his work. But the disciples of Jesus are from henceforth His friends; they are in His confidence, they are admitted to the inner circle of intimates, to His close companionship. The only name that will now fit them is that of friends, for the Master has revealed to them the secrets of the Father, His essence and especially His counsel of love for the salvation of mankind. This is such a great honor because there is no equality between Him and them, to begin with. Between men of equal rank, friendship springs up spontaneously. But in this instance it was pure grace and mercy on the part of Jesus which prompted Him to choose them. There was not the faintest idea in the mind of the believers to elect Christ as their Savior or to range themselves on His side. This choosing was done entirely by Him. Everything that is done by the believers in faith is the result of the gracious election of Christ. It is on that account that they have been set, appointed, for the purpose of going out, of showing themselves before the world and doing good works. And these fruits of their faith and election should not be passing and evanescent, but they should have a permanent, lasting value. As believing Christians they have that ability, and they should make use of the energy and power supplied to them by Christ through faith. And this, in turn, implies such a close intimacy with the Father that the believers freely bring their petitions and prayers before Him. They pray in the name of Jesus, trusting in His redemption, which has restored them into their rightful position as children of God, knowing that God will hear their prayer and give them the blessings which they are in need of. Christ and the Father are to the believers a constant source and fountain of spiritual strength. They owe everything that they are, that they have, and all the good they do, to Christ and to the love of Christ.

The result of the Christians' calling: V. 17. **These things I command you that ye love one another.** V. 18. **If the world hate you, ye know that it hated Me before it hated you.** V. 19. **If ye were of the world, the world would love his own; but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.** V. 20. **Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted Me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept My saying, they will keep yours also.** V. 21. **But all these things will they do unto you for My name's sake, because they know not Him that sent Me.** The Lord again summarizes all the demands of Christian life in the one command, namely, that the Christians love one another. This is not a command in the sense of the Mosaic injunctions, but a truly evangelical admonition. That must be the principal characteristic of the Christians by which they are distinguished from all men, the mutual love which they show toward one another in all their dealings. But this behavior necessarily implies a segregation from the world, from other people among whom the Christians are living. It brings upon the believers the hatred of the world, an undying, malignant hatred, that may sometimes hide itself under the guise of toleration, but never sleeps. Under these circumstances the Christians should feel neither anxiety nor surprise, for it is altogether in accordance with the nature of the world to hate the believers, as they hated Christ, the Lord, before them. There is that ineradicable contrast between Christ and His disciples, on the one side, and the world, the unbelievers, on the other. If the Christians were of the world, if they had the nature, the manner, the character of the world, the world would immediately recognize the affinity and treat them accordingly. But now Jesus, by His choosing them, has separated the believers from the world. So the natural result is this characteristic hatred of the unbelievers, expressed sometimes only in veiled insinuations, then again in open enmity. Christ's disciples of all times should therefore keep in remembrance the word that the servant is not greater than his lord; the servant cannot expect to experience better treatment than his master is receiving. The Lord Jesus suffered persecution of the most malicious kind during His earthly stay: His disciples can expect no less. On the other hand, if they have kept, observed, and practised the Word of the Master, the world will be apt to accord the same treatment to their teaching. That is always a ray of hope in a ministry which otherwise has little to commend it to one eager for the service of Christ. The reason for, and the explanation of, the hatred and persecution of the disciples is very simple. In the first place, the children of the world hate the very name of Jesus as the Savior of the world. The idea of a Redeemer from sins is not only distasteful, but absolutely hateful to them. And then, they had no knowledge of the Father that sent forth Jesus into the world with the aim and object that He avowed to have. Had they known God, they would without fail have recognized in Jesus Christ the Ambassador and Son of God. This explanation is the comfort of the disciples under whatever persecutions may come upon them, also in these latter days.

The hatred of the world and the testimony of the Spirit: V. 22. **If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin; but now they have no cloak for their sin.** V. 23. **He that hateth Me hateth My Father also.** V. 24. **If I had not done among them the works which none other man did,**

they had not had sin; but now have they both seen and hated both Me and My Father. V. 25. But this cometh to pass that the word might be fulfilled that is written in their Law, They hated Me without a cause. V. 26. But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of Truth, which proceedeth from the Father, He shall testify of Me. V. 27. And ye also shall bear witness, because ye have been with Me from the beginning. The position of the unbelieving Jews at the time of Jesus was much like that of Paul, Rom. 7, 7. If Jesus had not come and revealed Himself to the world as the Messiah, if He had not taught and preached as He did, then their great sin, unbelief, would not have been committed. After the revelation of Christ, after the open preaching of the Gospel before the world, there is no longer any excuse for unbelief. It is here laid bare as the sin of sins, for Christ earned and offered full atonement for all sins, and in rejecting Him they also rejected His atonement, whereby their sins were returned to them with their full damnation. And in hating Jesus they also hated the Father, thus loading upon themselves a still greater measure of guilt. That is the climax of enmity toward God, that the world despises and rejects the love of God, the grace of God in Christ, that the children of unbelief hate that God who offers them mercy and peace. The situation is perfectly plain. Jesus had not only preached of the Father time and again, but He had revealed Him also through His works, through His miracles. They had rejected this revelation in their unbelief. Seeing the Father in the person of the Son, they had hated Christ and therefore also the Father, with whom He is One. There is no excuse for the world, but there is some measure of comfort for the disciples in the fact that the world's hatred has been prophesied, Ps. 69, 4. Without a just cause, from a mere spirit of contrariness, the world hated Christ, and today hates the Christians. Their rejection of Him, of His Word, and of His followers, is inexcusable.

But over against all this hatred and enmity of the world stands the comforting promise of Christ concerning the Holy Spirit and His testimony. The Comforter, the Helper, the Guide, whom He has promised them, will surely come. Christ will send Him from the Father, for such is His power as the exalted Son of God. He is the Spirit of Truth; the teaching of the eternal Gospel and the revealing of its glory and beauties to the hearts of the believers is His principal work. He is sent by the Son, but proceeds also from the Father. There is the most wonderful intimacy between the various persons of the Godhead. To testify of Jesus the Savior: that is the office of the Spirit; for that reason He bears the name Spirit of Truth. "I shall give you, says Christ, the Spirit that will make you sure and certain of the truth, that ye no longer dare doubt with regard to this or that concerning your salvation, but may be sure of the matter and be judges, and even judge all other doctrine." 66) Note how strongly the Trinity of the Godhead is here brought out: Jesus, the speaker, as one person, will send the Comforter from the Father, a person distinct from Himself; and this Comforter, in turn, is distinguished from the Father and from the Son. With the aid of this Comforter and Helper the disciples would be able to witness, to testify concerning the redemption of mankind through the work of Christ. And their testimony should have all the greater weight and value because they had been with the Lord from the beginning; they could speak of what they had seen and heard. With such a wonderful witness from on high to support and strengthen them, there was no reason why the disciples should not perform their work with all energy and power, even as this attitude should characterize their work to-day. "There is therefore no other manner or way to comfort, strengthen, and instruct the consciences, and to protect and defend one's self, than by this preaching and testimony of the Holy Ghost. . . . That is the Word of God, preached in the world through the Holy Ghost, known also to the children, which also the portals of hell shall not overthrow." 67)

Summary. *Jesus tells His disciples the Parable of the Vine and the Branches with its application, explains and urges the commandment of brotherly love, and speaks of the hatred of the world against the disciples of Christ.*

66) Luther, 8, 599.
67) Luther, 8, 603. 605.

CHAPTER 16.

Comfort against the World's Hatred.

John 16, 1—15.

The intensity of the world's hatred: **V. 1. These things have I spoken unto you that ye should not be offended. V. 2. They shall put you out of the synagogs; yea, the time cometh that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service. V. 3. And these things will they do unto you because they have not known the Father nor Me. V. 4. But these things have I told you that, when the time shall come, ye may remember that I told you of them. And these things I said not unto you at the beginning, because I was with you.** Jesus had both warned His disciples of persecution and

hatred, and had given them encouragement to meet all such demonstrations. And all these statements were made with the view of saving the disciples against being offended, that the coming of the predicted tribulations should not scandalize them. They now know that all these things happen in accordance with God's counsel and will or by His permission. The hatred of the world, of the children of unbelief, may have various forms or degrees. For one thing, they will excommunicate the believers in Christ, they will exclude them from all external communion. The ostracism of the true disciples of Christ, in both church and society, is a favorite method of manifesting enmity toward Christ to this very day. And the time will come, Jesus says, when bigotry and hatred against Christ and His followers will not be satisfied with such measures, but will not even shrink back from murder itself. Every one of them, as a fitting representative of the whole class, will have the idea that he is thereby doing an act of special worship toward God. Every one will believe that his murderous intent and execution is a work of great merit and well pleasing to God. These words have been and are being fulfilled continually. The believers have ever been accounted a mad and malicious company. But the reason for this hatred, its intensity and its expression, is found, as Jesus has remarked before in the fact that the unbelievers know neither the Father nor the Son. From the beginning Jesus had attempted to bring out the relation between Himself and His Father very strongly; both His words and His works proclaimed the union between them, and yet the deliberate blindness of the unbelieving Jews continued. "But this is said for our comfort and strength against such excommunicating and murdering, that we pay no attention to it nor be offended. For here we have the testimony and the glory, which they themselves must give us by their own confession, that they do not persecute us on account of such matters in which they could adduce a public proof as doing well and right, as in the things in which the world has a right to condemn and to punish, so far as notorious scoundrels, thieves, murderers, and rebels are concerned, but they persecute us in those matters of which they neither know nor understand anything, namely, that we preach of Christ and the Father, whom they know not, and yet, in their blindness, they oppose such preaching and rage against it." 68) What Jesus therefore has told His disciples will serve both as a warning and as a consolation, lest the coming of the trials and persecutions occasion surprise and offense. It had not been necessary for Jesus to give them such a full account at the beginning of His ministry; for in those days, and since, He had been with them as their Friend and Protector, guarding them against both weakness and persecution.

The comfort of Christ's going away: V. 5. **But now I go My way to Him that sent Me; and none of you asketh Me, Whither goest Thou?** V. 6. **But because I have said these things unto you, sorrow hath filled your heart.** V. 7. **Nevertheless I tell you the truth: It is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send Him unto you.** So long has Jesus been with them as Guide and Protector; but now the time for departure has come. But instead of provoking all manner of inquiries on their part, the announcement has stunned them with sorrow. The Lord has discharged the mission for which He was sent, and, in a manner of speaking, goes to report on a duty properly performed. But His words concerning His leaving find no interest on the part of the disciples as to His future welfare. Their attitude savors strongly of selfishness at the loss of the Master and grief at His departure. They are insensible to the real issue involved. And therefore He gives them the comforting, cheering assurance that His going away is expedient for them, that it will accrue to their advantage, that they will reap only benefit from it. If He should stay in their midst with His bodily presence, then the other, greater event would be rendered impossible: the Comforter would not come. The sending of the Spirit depended upon the fact that Christ should enter into the glory of His Father according to His human nature. As the exalted Son of Man He would have and make use of the power to send them the Comforter. "This is the meaning of these words: If I go not away, that is, if I do not die and be removed from this corporeal essence and life, nothing is gained, but you remain where you are now, and everything will remain in the old way as it was formerly and still is: the Jews under the Law of Moses, the heathen in their blindness; all under sin and death, and no one can be delivered therefrom nor be saved. Thus no scripture would be fulfilled and I should have come in vain, and all would be useless, both what the holy fathers before you and you yourselves believed and hoped. But if I depart and die and carry out what God has decided in His counsel to perform through Me, then the Holy Ghost will come to you, and work in you, and give you such courage that you will become My officers and coregents, change the whole world, abrogate the Law, or Jewry, destroy the heathen idolatry, and rebuke and change the whole world, so that your doctrine will remain and penetrate everlastingly, though it will displease the devil and the whole world. That is the gift and the glory which My going away brings to you." 69) Note: It appears from these words of Christ that we Christians of the present time have more benefit from the work of the

68) Luther, 8, 624. 625.

69) Luther, 8, 645.

Comforter, the Holy Ghost, than the disciples had of the personal, visible presence of the Lord when He dwelt among them in the form of a servant.

The reproof of the world: V. 8. **And when He is come, He will reprove the world of sin and of righteousness and of judgment:** v. 9. **of sin, because they believe not on Me;** v. 10. **of righteousness, because I go to My Father, and ye see Me no more;** v. 11. **of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged.** And that Person, the Holy Spirit, coming into the world, will convict the world. That is one special function and activity of the Spirit, to convict the unbelieving world on three counts, with regard to sin, justice, and judgment. This the Lord explains. Of sin the world stands accused and unable to deny the charge that they do not believe on Christ, because they wilfully choose unbelief. That is the chief sin of the world, of the unbelievers, that they reject Christ and His Gospel. All other sins do not come into consideration if a person but believes in the forgiveness of sins. And therefore unbelief, which refuses to accept the forgiveness of sins, deliberately cuts itself off from salvation. This fact the Spirit impresses upon the minds and hearts of the unbelievers. "The world will not hear such preaching that they should all be sinners before God, and that their pious works have no value before Him, but that they rather through this crucified Christ must obtain mercy and salvation. Such unbelief against Christ becomes the sum and substance of all sins that lead a person into damnation, so that there is no help for him." 70) In close connection with this fact is the further truth that the Spirit convicts the unbelieving world of righteousness, since Jesus was going to the Father and would no longer be with them according to His visible presence. The true righteousness consists in this, that Christ, by His going to the Father, by His suffering, death, and resurrection, earned and prepared the righteousness which is acceptable with God. But the world wants nothing of Christ's blood and righteousness, preferring its own self-righteousness. And so both righteousness and salvation are lost to them by unbelief, as the Spirit will impress upon them. And He will finally convict them of the judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged and condemned. The redemption of Christ sealed the devil's doom; he has lost might and right with regard to mankind since sin was conquered by Jesus. This the Holy Ghost testifies to the hearts of the unbelievers, showing them that because of their unbelief they will have to share the doom of the devil, that they are condemned for rejecting the Conqueror of Satan. This also serves for the comfort of the believers, since they know that the world is even now convicted.

The Spirit's work for the believers: V. 12. **I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now.** V. 13. **Howbeit when He, the Spirit of Truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth; for He shall not speak of Himself, but whatsoever He shall hear, that shall He speak; and He will show you things to come.** V. 14. **He shall glorify Me; for He shall receive of Mine, and shall show it unto you.** V. 15. **All things that the Father hath are Mine; therefore said I that He shall take of Mine, and shall show it unto you.** Much more remains to be said, much more Christ would like to tell His disciples, but in their present state of little faith, of immature spirituality, mixed with sorrow and grief over His leaving, they would not be able to grasp, to understand it. Jesus had indeed told His disciples all that they needed for their salvation, and there was and is no need for further arbitrary revelations, no matter from what sources these claim to come. But the disciples needed further instruction in order to understand the instruction which they had already received from the Master. And this would be provided for by the Spirit of Truth, by the Spirit whose essential function would be the teaching of the truth, the Word of God. He will teach them, serve as their Guide in leading them into the whole truth. He will bring their hearts and minds into the truth, make them familiar with it, let them understand and grasp the truth, have them realize the grace of God in Christ Jesus. And in doing this, the Spirit will not display an arbitrary, independent activity. The relation between the persons of the Godhead is the intimacy of unity and precludes any such possibility. The Spirit can and will lead the believers into all truth, because He will not bring a separate, independent revelation and Gospel, but will speak what He has heard in the council of the Godhead. The guarantee of the Spirit's teaching is that He will utter the words of the Triune God as such. "Here He makes the Holy Ghost a preacher, in order that no one shall stand gaping up into heaven (as the flighty spirits and enthusiasts do) and separate Him from the oral Word or ministry of preaching, but know and learn that He wants to be with and in the Word, and through it lead us into all truth, that we have faith in it, and fight therewith, and be kept against all lies and deceit of the devil, and conquer in all tribulations." 71) Thus the Spirit, in the Word, reveals and makes plain the mysteries of God and heaven. And since He is a Spirit of prophecy, He will tell also of things that are to come, that are now coming. The future salvation also belongs to the counsel of God: the coming of Christ to judgment, the consummation of the redemption in the Kingdom of Glory. And in regard to all

70) Luther, 8, 654.

71) Luther, 8, 676.

these facts the Spirit will give the proper information. Moreover, in doing so, His work will redound to the glory of the Savior, since the truth which He will reveal He will receive from Christ for the purpose of preaching. By picturing Christ before the eyes and hearts of the believers, the Holy Spirit provides and gives to Christ the glory which is due Him in His capacity as Savior. And in taking His doctrine from the Son, the Spirit incidentally receives His doctrine from the Father, for since they have the Godhead in common, they have also the divine knowledge in common. Jesus here makes a very bold statement, as Luther says, and one that could not be made by any mere man. All that the Father has, He says, is Mine. He not only has charge of it; it is not only in His possession for a short time, but He has absolute power over its disposition, for He and the Father have everything in common. The Spirit has the unlimited fulness of the Godhead to draw from, all in the interest of the believers. That is the work of the Spirit for and in the believers, that He teaches them to know Jesus Christ, the Savior, aright and with ever-increasing clearness.

The Comfort of Christ's Second Advent.

John 16, 16—33.

The comfort of the short separation: V. 16. **A little while, and ye shall not see Me; and again a little while, and ye shall see Me, because I go to the Father.** V. 17. **Then said some of His disciples among themselves, What is this that He saith unto us, A little while, and ye shall not see Me; and again a little while, and ye shall see Me; and, Because I go to the Father?** V. 18. **They said therefore, What is this that He saith, A little while? We cannot tell what He saith.** Only a little while it was, only a few short hours, and the Savior would be hidden from the eyes of His disciples in the darkness of the tomb, and they would not be able to behold Him. But then it would again be only a short while, a matter of a few days, when their eyes would be gladdened by His reappearance as their living Savior. But the intention of the Lord seems to be to convey also another great truth to their hearts, since He says that He is going to the Father, making this statement the basis for the others. His ascension was but a few days away, after which they would no longer enjoy the comfort of His personal, physical presence; but His return to glory would follow very shortly after that. In either case, and with either intended meaning, the words were full of comfort and cheer for the disciples. But the latter understood nothing of the joyful message. They were aroused from their apathetic dulness only to the extent that they discussed the probable meaning of Christ among themselves. The result of their discussion was that they frankly stated their inability to understand, to know the meaning of, the Master. They were utterly bewildered and alarmed; a dread sense of impending disaster took hold of their hearts.

The consoling assurance of Jesus: V. 19. **Now Jesus knew that they were desirous to ask Him, and said unto them, Do ye enquire among yourselves of that I said, A little while, and ye shall not see Me; and again a little while, and ye shall see Me?** V. 20. **Verily, verily, I say unto you, That ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice; and ye shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy.** V. 21. **A woman, when she is in travail, hath sorrow, because her hour is come; but as soon as she is delivered of the child, she remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world.** V. 22. **And ye now therefore have sorrow; but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you.** Jesus was fully aware of the anxious bewilderment and embarrassment of the disciples, and that they were ashamed to ask for an explanation. In His usual kind manner, therefore, He comes to their assistance by stating the difficulty which was agitating their minds. They could not quite become reconciled to the idea of His leaving them and going to the Father, nor did they fully comprehend what was included in these statements, as well as in the others that He should be removed from their sight for a little while and in just as short a space of time be seen of them once more. "We have now often heard what it means 'to go to the Father'; which indeed is not a common expression, such as men usually employ and as they generally understand it, but is the language of the Lord Christ and His Christians. That Christ went forth from, or was sent by, the Father means nothing else than that He, the true Son of God from eternity, became a true man, and revealed Himself on earth in human nature, essence, and form, permitted Himself to be seen, heard, and felt, ate, drank, slept, worked, suffered, and died, like any other person. Again, that He goes to the Father, that means that He will be glorified by His resurrection from the dead, that He sits at the right hand of God and reigns with Him in eternity, as eternal, almighty God. For by His coming down or going from the Father He revealed and proved Himself a true, natural man; but by His return to the Father He declares Himself to be true, eternal God, out of God the Father, and thus remains in one person both God and man, and should be thus known and believed." 72) Very impressively Jesus tells the disciples the natural result of His removal from them, especially under such conditions as would soon be evident. They would weep and lament at the bitterness of His Passion, His

72) Luther, 8, 691.

crucifixion, and His death, while the world, represented by the unbelieving Jews, especially the leaders of the Church, would be filled with joy. But their sorrow-stricken souls would very quickly find wonderful consolation, which would turn their grief into rejoicing. The Lord adds an illustration to show in what way the acuteness and intensity of an overwhelming sorrow will be converted into joyful delight. At the time when the sorrow and pains of the mother are greatest and death itself seems imminent, the crisis is practically past; and with the birth of the child there comes the joy over the safe delivery and over the babe itself, causing the remembrance of the great sorrow to vanish. So the sorrow and pain of the disciples would be very acute and harsh, but with the return of their Master their joy would be all the greater; it would be such a joy as would surpass all human happiness, such a joy as could never be taken from them. Since the time of Pentecost with its wonderful revelation all believers may become partakers of this joy. Sorrow over the death of Christ can no longer affect us; Jesus now comes to us in a spiritual manner, with His Holy Spirit; He reveals all the glories of His salvation to our hearts. The Christians see and know Jesus by faith as the Son of God and their Savior, and are filled with a joy which will continue as long as His presence continues, to the end of time.

The prayer that never fails: V. 23. **And in that day ye shall ask Me nothing. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in My name, He will give it you.** V. 24. **Hitherto have ye asked nothing in My name. Ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full.** V. 25. **These things have I spoken unto you in proverbs; but the time cometh when I shall no more speak unto you in proverbs, but I shall show you plainly of the Father.** V. 26. **At that day ye shall ask in My name; and I say not unto you that I will pray the Father for you;** v. 27. **for the Father Himself loveth you, because ye have loved Me, and have believed that I came out from God.** V. 28. **I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world; again, I leave the world, and go to the Father.** In that day, with the coming of the revelation through the Spirit, there will no longer be need to ask the Lord any questions. Though the personal intercourse between them and their Master had terminated, they would have the benefit and the certainty of a direct communion through the work of the Spirit. And solemnly Jesus assures them that their relation to the Father will be of a nature permitting them to go directly to Him with all their desires and needs, for their prayers will all be made in the name of Jesus. Because the atonement of Jesus has effected peace with the Father, has restored the believers to their position as children of God, they have but to refer to Jesus and His work, to appeal to His redemption, to be assured of the hearing of their prayers. The work of the Mediator and Savior had not been completed, and therefore the disciples had not prayed in His name. But now the road to the Father's heart has been opened, and they shall entreat, they shall ask, knowing that they will receive, and thus have also the fulfilment of their joy. The efficacy of prayer depends upon faith in the Savior as the Substitute of mankind, by whom we have free access to the Father. In order to bring this truth home to the disciples still more strongly, the Lord frankly tells them that His teaching has been, to a large extent, in proverbial, parabolic sayings. But the hour is coming, after He will have entered into His glory, when He will speak to them without pictures or difficult figures, through the work of the Spirit. Then He will also teach them, announce to them plainly, what is meant by knowing the Father, by having the right understanding of His love and mercy. At that time prayer in the name of Jesus will be so strong, so efficacious, that there will not even be need of His special intercession for them. This is necessary, as a matter of course, to establish the right relation between God and the believers. Cp. Rom. 8, 34. But so great is the Father's love which has been evoked by the love of the believers in Christ and by their firm belief that He came into the world to reveal the Father, to be His Ambassador, that the Father will deal directly with His children and will grant their prayers. And this the disciples should once more be assured of: Jesus went forth from the Father and came into the world to carry into effect the plan of salvation for all mankind. And now He leaves the world and goes to the Father, thus signifying that the work which He intended to perform has been done. That fact establishes the relation between God and the believers, and renders all their prayers in the name of Jesus acceptable to Him. Note: Everything that the believers ask of God in the name of Jesus, by faith in His merit, He will give to them. For they pray as the children of God, that have the nature and manner of their Father. It is self-evident, therefore, that they pray only for such things as please the Father, 1 John 5, 14. That includes, above all, that they leave both the time and the manner of the hearing to His fatherly wisdom.

The close of the discourse: V. 29. **His disciples said unto Him, Lo, now speakest Thou plainly, and speakest no proverb.** V. 30. **Now are we sure that Thou knowest all things, and needest not that any man should ask Thee; by this we believe that Thou camest forth from God.** V. 31. **Jesus answered them: Do ye now believe?** V. 32. **Behold, the hour cometh, yea, is now come, that ye shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave Me alone; and yet I am not alone, because the Father**

is with Me. V. 33. **These things I have spoken unto you that in Me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.** The last statements of Jesus had been so clear and unmistakable, of the love of the Father, of Christ's coming from, and going to, the Father, that the disciples thought they understood Him perfectly. There was neither parable nor proverb in these sayings, and they had the conviction, which they also freely expressed, that He had a full knowledge of all things, and that His teaching was free from all obscurity. The implication of the disciples is that they need not wait for some future manifestation and revelation, when everything would be clear to their minds. They were persuaded now of His divine Sonship. But the enthusiasm of the disciples was premature; the time of Pentecost had not yet come; they must first experience sorrow and suffering. Jesus tells them that the test of their faith, of which they now seemed so sure, would come very soon. And the result would be most disappointing. They would be scattered, they would flee from His side, leaving Him all alone in His great Passion. Their own interests, their life and safety, would claim their first consideration. So would they fail Him in the critical hour. But as for Him, the prospect did not fill Him with terror; He would not be alone, since His Father would be with Him. His presence would at all times be sufficient for all needs. And now the Lord once more summarizes His loving sayings of the evening in one short sentence. He has spoken to them, He has given them all the necessary assurances, in order that in Him they might have peace. He places Himself and His sphere of activity in contrast to the world and her sphere of influence and activity. In the world, in the midst of the unbelievers, the disciples of all times have tribulation; from them they may expect only persecution and torment. That is the inevitable lot of the confessors of Christ. And yet they should feel happy and be of good cheer. For in Jesus they have peace. Amidst all the turmoil and hatred and persecution of these latter days the Christians have peace with God, peace in Christ the Savior. For He, Jesus, our Champion, has overcome the world. Though His Passion proper had not yet begun, the Lord knows that He will be Conqueror in the battle with sin, death, and hell, that all His enemies will be made His footstool. And therefore He will make the necessary provisions that His disciples will not be overcome by enmity and persecution. "Behold, that is the kind farewell and comforting last word which Christ leaves to His disciples; He would fain talk into their hearts. Although the apostles at that time did not understand it and even we do not yet understand it, . . . yet we have seen, by the grace of God, that the Holy Ghost reminded many hearts of these words when it came to the battle, and strengthened them that in the memory of that victory they endured everything, and died a peaceful death. May God help also us and give us that mind that we also cling to this fact in misfortune and death!" 73)

Summary. *Jesus teaches concerning the office of the Holy Spirit, both in rebuking and in comforting, and of His own going to the Father, and the blessed results which would thereby come to the believers.*

73) Luther, 8, 743. 744.

CHAPTER 17.

Christ's Great Sacerdotal Prayer.

John 17, 1—26.

Christ prays for His own glorification: V. 1. **These words spake Jesus, and lifted up His eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come; glorify Thy Son that Thy Son also may glorify Thee,** v. 2. **as Thou hast given Him power over all flesh that He should give eternal life to as many as Thou hast given Him.** V. 3. **And this is life eternal, that they might know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent.** V. 4. **I have glorified Thee on the earth; I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do.** V. 5. **And now, O Father, glorify Thou Me with Thine own self with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was.** Jesus had finished the words of His last great charge to His disciples. And now He lifts up His eyes to His heavenly Father and pours forth His soul in a most wonderful and inspiring prayer of intercession. It has fitly been called the great sacerdotal prayer, for here Jesus appears in His work as Mediator, beseeching His heavenly Father first for Himself, then for His little band of disciples, and finally for all those that would be gathered by the proclamation of the Gospel. There is so much beauty, comfort, and power in this simple prayer that its main thoughts at least, if not the entire text, should be memorized. Jesus prayed in the presence of His disciples; what He wanted to tell the Father, what He wanted to ask of the Father, was in their interest, and in the interest of the faithful of all times. "But this is the summary and reason for this chapter. Upon a good sermon there should follow a good prayer, that is: If one has sent forth the Word, he should begin to utter prayerful sighs and to desire that it may also have power and work

fruit. For since Christ the Lord has now enunciated all His doctrine and office and completed it, and has blessed His disciples with the fine, long, comforting sermon, He finally felt constrained to speak a prayer, both for them and for all Christians, in order that He might fully bring to end His office, as our one High Priest, and omit nothing that would serve to strengthen and keep them, since He wanted to leave them behind Him in the world." 74) Jesus addresses His Father in just that one word, thereby giving to His prayer a tone of intimacy and confidence which should characterize every true prayer. The hour is come, that one hour which was to be the climax and culmination of His life's work, the hour in which He was to go to the Father through His death. Therefore the Father should glorify the Son, He should have the purpose of His life carried out through His Passion, death, resurrection, and session at the right hand of God. This glorification concerns the human nature of Christ; according to this nature He was to be endowed with the unlimited exercise of all the divine attributes. And the object of this glorification would be, in turn, that the Son should glorify the Father. The fulfilment of the will of the Father, the reconciliation of the world, the imparting of the redemption to all believers, all these facts would redound to the glory of the Father. The entire work of Christ in His state of exaltation is a continuous glorifying of the Father: its aim and object is the praise of God for His grace and mercy in Christ Jesus. The glorification of the Father is therefore in accordance with the measure of power given to Christ with respect to all flesh, that God, on account of the work of Jesus, might have the Savior give to every one that belonged to Him eternal life. The Son has the authority and power to give eternal life to them that God gave Him as His own. Through His suffering and death Jesus has power over all flesh, since He earned all men, gained them for Himself, by His redemption. There is none excepted: whosoever belongs to the category "flesh" is included in the number of those for whom Jesus paid with His blood. And out of this whole number God has given certain ones to Jesus. They are the ones that actually receive the salvation of Jesus by faith, they are the only ones that actually become partakers of the grace of God in Christ the Savior. The object of salvation, intended for all men, is realized only in the case of the believers. But this life eternal, which the believers receive at the hands of Jesus, consists in the true knowledge, in the right understanding of God as the only true God, as the one and only Lord, and of Jesus Christ, the Savior, in both His person and office, as the one sent by God to accomplish the salvation of the world. The knowledge and belief in both the Father and the Son are necessary for the obtaining of eternal life, for the two are on the same level: the Father has revealed Himself in the Son, and the Son has made known the Father. Eternal life is the intimate union and communion with the Father and the Son. This happiness and bliss begins even here in time; here on earth, indeed, only in part, but in the future life in all its fulness and glory. In this way the Son glorifies the Father, by bringing the believers to the right knowledge of the Father. This work He began in this world, that was one of the purposes of the incarnation. The fact that Jesus carried out the work entrusted to Him, that He fulfilled the will of the Father in every detail, will serve the glory and praise of the Father. Every person that was gained by the teaching of Jesus will add his voice in praising the God of mercy and in praying to Him in spirit and in truth. All this being accomplished, the Father should now, in turn, receive the Son up into glory, crown His human nature with the full and unrestricted exercise of all the divine attributes and powers which were His in the bosom of the Father before the world began. Jesus, even in the midst of humiliation on earth, was the possessor of the divine glory; even as man He was almighty, omniscient, omnipresent. But He did not make use of these divine attributes communicated to Him except in His miracles and at a few other occasions when the flashes of His divine majesty became visible to men. But through His Passion, death, and resurrection Jesus wanted to enter into the state of glory, into the full exercise and enjoyment of the heavenly, divine essence, and of all the joy and bliss in the presence of His Father, also according to His human nature. This section of Christ's prayer therefore includes a petition for Himself, namely, for His own glorification as man; but He indicates even here that this glorious culmination will be of benefit also to men.

Christ prays for the disciples as such that have kept the Word: V. 6. **I have manifested Thy name unto the men which Thou gavest Me out of the world; Thine they were, and Thou gavest them Me; and they have kept Thy Word.** V. 7. **Now they have known that all things whatsoever Thou hast given Me are of Thee.** V. 8. **For I have given unto them the words which Thou gavest Me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from Thee, and they have believed that Thou didst send Me.** The prayer of the Lord now concerns His disciples, specifically His apostles. To them He has manifested, revealed, the name of the Father; the whole essence and glory of the Father Jesus has proclaimed and taught to those men whom the Father had given Him out of the world as His own. He has shown them what the feeling and intention of the Father is toward sinful men. By this preaching and the call which it included certain men were separated out of the world by the Father and allotted, given, to

74) Luther, 8, 747.

Christ. They were God's own by His choice and selection; and the Father gave them to Christ in time, in order that the latter might give them the revelation and knowledge necessary for obtaining eternal life. This object was realized; the men accepted and kept the Word of the Gospel; the faith which was worked in their hearts clings to the promises of the Gospel. The disciples, first of all, had gained the understanding that Jesus was not acting in an independent capacity, apart from the will and counsel of God, but that all the gifts and powers and words which He displayed and taught were from the Father. Then also, when Jesus had delivered to them the words which He had received from His Father, they had accepted them in faith. By their acceptance of the words, of the teaching of Christ with this understanding, they have shown that they have true faith and correct knowledge. So the disciples have the true knowledge, the certainty of faith, that Christ really came from the Father, that He was the Messenger and Ambassador of the Father to mankind. To accept the Word of God, to cling to the promises and statements of the Gospel, that is the characteristic attitude and work of the believers. So much the ministry of Jesus and His testimony had effected in their case.

The distinction between the disciples and the world: V. 9. **I pray for them; I pray not for the world, but for them which Thou hast given Me; for they are Thine.** V. 10. **And all Mine are Thine, and Thine are Mine; and I am glorified in them.** V. 11. **And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to Thee. Holy Father, keep through Thine own name those whom Thou hast given Me, that they may be one as We are.** Jesus here makes a deliberate distinction. He expressly says that He is praying for His disciples; His intercession concerns them only. He sets aside the unbelieving world, for the unbelievers included under that name refuse to accept Him under any circumstances. "But this is the difference. In this way and in the same manner He does not pray for the world as He does for His Christians. For the Christians and for all that are to be converted He prays thus, that they may remain in the true faith, grow and continue in it, and not fall away from it, and that those that are still without faith leave their manner and also come. That means to pray right and well for the world, as we should all pray." 75) For those that God has given Him by a deliberate act of mercy, and that belong to God by His gracious choice and selection, Jesus prays. He is so certain of being heard in this instance because the believers are God's own, in whom He will naturally take an interest. And Jesus here addresses the Father in a very bold manner: **And what is Mine is all Thine, and what is Thine is Mine.** He calmly claims absolute community of interests and property for Himself and the Father. "This no creature can say before God. For you must understand this not only of that which the Father has given Him on earth, but also of His one divine essence with the Father. For He speaks not only of His disciples and Christians, but comprehends in one heap all that is the Father's, eternal, almighty essence, life, truth, righteousness, etc., that is, He confesses freely that He is true God, for the word 'All that is Thine is Mine' permits nothing to be excluded. If everything is His, then also the eternal Godhead is His; otherwise He cannot and dare not use the word 'all.'" 76) And so Jesus, the Son of God, that has everything in common with the Father, is glorified in His believers. He has taught them to know Him; He has brought His picture as the Redeemer of the world into their souls. Their understanding has been enlightened to enable them to understand, at least in a measure, the purpose of God in the salvation of the world, to place their trust in Christ, in the definite hope that the remaining revelation will be theirs in heaven. The career of Jesus in the world is now coming to its end; He is now leaving the world to return to His Father. But the disciples are still in the world, in the midst of unbelievers and enemies of the Gospel. Therefore the earnest petition of Christ is most necessary, that His Father, the holy Father, that desires to keep His holy name unsullied, would keep the believers in His name, in the confession of His name, in true faith, to the end. Only if the Father Himself takes care of His own, will the spiritual union of the believers in no wise be disturbed or brought to naught. God must keep the believers in the one true faith by the Word of His truth, which reveals and teaches His name. The preservation in faith is the work of God. To Him the believers of all times must look to keep them steadfast in His Word and faith, unto the end, as is His gracious and good will.

Keeping the believers in God's name: **V. 12. While I was with them in the world, I kept them in Thy name; those that Thou gavest Me I have kept, and none of them is lost but the son of perdition, that the Scripture might be fulfilled.** V. 13. **And now I come to Thee; and these things I speak in the world, that they might have My joy fulfilled in themselves.** As long as Jesus was present in the world, in the flesh, so long He personally tended to the keeping of His disciples in the faith. He taught, He admonished them day by day; He always revealed anew to them the name of the Father, in the Gospel which He proclaimed. And His Gospel-work had been most successful. He had kept all of the disciples whom the Father had given

75) Luther, 8, 790.

76) Luther, 8, 794.

Him, His watchful guiding and warning had not been in vain but only in one single case, that of the son of perdition, of the traitor. In his case the Scripture had to be fulfilled. Cp. Ps. 69, 4; Acts 1, 20. But now the sojourn of Christ on earth was drawing to a close; no more would He be present with His disciples in the terms of personal, visible contact to which they had become accustomed. Jesus was going to the Father, and therefore He was making this prayer in their presence, while He was yet in the world, that they might be convinced of His personal interest in them, of His unchanging solicitude for them. His urgent prayer for their preservation in the faith should give them the assurance, as it should to the believers of all times, that nothing is left undone which will assist them in the midst of all the perils of the world and their own flesh. That is a source of wonderful comfort to the believers, that gives them the fulness of joy. Theirs, then, is a joy in Christ; they are happy over the fact that they are Christians, that they are intimates of the Father. This joy must drive out every bit of doubt as to a person's remaining in faith to the end, just as this entire section of Christ's prayer contains nothing but comfort for every Christian. Where there is such intimacy as between God and Christ, on the one hand, and the believers, on the other, all fear and doubts must vanish. "Now if some one wants to know whether he is elected or in what relation he stands to God, let him but look upon the mouth of Jesus, that is, upon these and similar verses. For though a person cannot say of a certainty who will be elected in the future and remain to the end, yet this is certainly true, that whosoever is called and comes thereto, namely, to hear this revelation, that is, the Word of Christ, provided he accept it in all sincerity, that is, fully hold and believe that it is true, they are the ones that are given to Christ by the Father. But those that are given to Him He will surely keep, and insist that they do not perish." 77)

The Word keeps in faith: V. 14. **I have given them Thy Word; and the world hath hated them because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.** V. 15. **I pray not that Thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that Thou shouldest keep them from the evil.** V. 16. **They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.** V. 17. **Sanctify them through Thy truth; thy Word is truth.** V. 18. **As Thou hast sent Me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world.** V. 19. **And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth.** Only one means Jesus knows of, both for working faith and for keeping in the faith, and that means He has given to the disciples: the Word of the Father. There is no need of following the lead of enthusiasts that prate of new revelations, the inner light, and keys to the Scriptures. The Word of the Gospel as we have it in Scriptures is all-sufficient for all needs. But the Word thus becomes a distinguishing factor, since the Christians accept it, and the world, the unbelievers, refuses to recognize its worth and power. The result is that the unbelieving world hates the Christians. Their acceptance of the Gospel is a constant accusation of the world's rejection of Christ; it emphasizes the essential difference between believers and unbelievers. The former have nothing in common with the world, with the nature and manner of the children of the world. The attitude toward the Word of the Gospel is the deciding factor; the Word is the touchstone by which men decide their fate. The Word therefore is the rock-foundation of a Christian's faith. "There I have the Word of Christ, my Lord, yea, of the almighty Father in heaven; that I know and am certain, if I cling to that, then no power on earth nor the gates of hell can harm me, for He loves His Word and will hold His hand over it, and therefore also protect and defend all that cling to it." 78) The Christians, then, are perfectly willing and satisfied to occupy the position in which the world places them by its hatred, since thereby they are identified more fully with Christ. Purposely, therefore, Jesus does not ask that the believers be taken out of the world, that they be removed from the proximity of harm and danger and hatred, but only that the Father would keep them, shield them against the wiles of the devil. That is the one side of the Christians' preservation in faith, which is the work of God. God guards and protects them from their enemies, the world and the devil, by not permitting these enemies to seduce them, nor lead them into misbelief, despair, or other great shame and vice. That danger is always present, and many a believer has been overcome, since he did not trust in the power of God alone. What Jesus here prays should be remembered by all Christians at all times: They do not belong to the world, as I am not of the world. Christ and the unbelieving world have nothing in common; and so the followers of Christ and the unbelieving world can have nothing in common. Their interests, their objects, lie in opposite directions and can never be reconciled. To attempt a compromise with the unbelieving world is to make peace with the devil. And therefore the prayer of Jesus takes this factor into account. He asks that God complete the separation between the believers and the world, sanctify the disciples wholly by consecrating them to God alone, through the power of the Word. The Christians are sanctified, separated from the world, as soon as faith has been wrought in their hearts. But it is the power of God in the Word which must continue to keep them sepa-

77) Luther, 8, 779.

78) Luther, 8, 813.

rated and consecrated. And this sanctification and these fruits of faith are not our work and ability, but God's mercy and divine power.79) The believers being thus set apart through the power of the Word, they are ready for their great ministry. Even as God sent the Son into the world to preach and bring salvation, so the Son, in turn, sends the believers out into the world to preach the redemption that has been earned by Jesus. They should be witnesses for the truth, they should confess Christ. They are His witnesses to the world, for all men are included both under sin and under grace, John 3, 16. In the midst of the unbelieving world Christ wanted to build His Church. And in order that this might be accomplished, in order that the work of the disciples might be done with the feeling of free and full consecration, Jesus consecrates Himself, gives Himself as a sacrifice for the whole world. He is about to enter upon His Passion now to work a perfect redemption. And every believer that accepts this deliverance, this redemption, thereby is separated from the hostile, unbelieving world and consecrated in and for the truth of the Gospel. Thus the disciples are sanctified and remain sanctified; they remain in the Word of Truth, in and through which the sin which persists in troubling them is forgiven, and they receive strength both to combat the evil and to carry out the will of the Lord for the proclamation of the Word to others.

Christ prays for the future believers: V. 20. **Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on Me through their word,** v. 21. **that they all may be one, as Thou, Father, art in Me and I in Thee, that they also may be one in Us; that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me.** V. 22. **And the glory which Thou gavest Me I have given them, that they may be one, even as We are one:** v. 23. **I in them and Thou in Me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that Thou hast sent Me, and hast loved them, as Thou hast loved Me.** V. 24. **Father, I will that they also whom Thou hast given Me be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory which Thou hast given Me; for Thou lovedst Me before the foundation of the world.** Jesus Himself had gained believers, disciples, through the preaching of the Word. In their interest He had addressed a large section of His prayer to His heavenly Father. But before His mind's eye there arose the picture of the future, when the purpose of His work in the world would be fully realized, when the holy Christian Church, the communion of saints, would be gathered from all nations. Through the testimony of the disciples, whom He is commissioning as His messengers to the world, there will be others, many others, that would believe on Him through the Word as proclaimed by the servants of the Lord. And all these believing Christians of all times shall be one. All those that have faith in Jesus Christ as their Savior, and actually put all their trust in Him alone, are thereby united most closely and inseparably. Even though they know nothing of each other, even though they belong to various Christian denominations: if they but have faith in the Word and in the Savior in their hearts, they are all truly, internally one communion of saints. This unity of the Church of all places and of all times is in God, in the Father and Son. It is as real and intimate as the union obtaining between these two persons of the Godhead. And the influence of this great united body, though invisible in itself, will be such as to compel the acknowledgment of the world as to Christ's having been sent into the world by the Father to work salvation for all men. There are so many manifestations of the power of God in the work of the Church that at all times some, at least, in the world are convinced and gained for Christ. The Christian Church does a great deal of missionary work by its very existence. Add to that the confession and the testimony of the believers, and much may be accomplished for the Savior and His glory. To this end the Lord has given to His disciples the glory which He has received from the Father. The Christians, by the call of Christ, have a certain amount of divine nature, of divine power, by virtue of their regeneration and sanctification. They exhibit this divine life in their whole being and manner. Their every word and act serves to impress men with the power of the Word of God in them. But it serves especially to make that communion of their hearts and minds before the Lord perfect, since it places them in contrast to the world. And thus again the unbelieving world gets some idea of the truth of the Christian religion and of its superhuman power. Some of them will always, by the grace of God, form the right conclusions as to the mission of Christ and as to the certainty of God's love toward them, equal in sincerity and power to that wherewith He loves the Son. Jesus, therefore, in His omniscience beholding the assembly of the Church as it will be gathered until the end of time, makes a bold request: Father, those that Thou hast given Me, I will that where I am, they also be with Me. Here is the confidence of the Redeemer, whose vicarious work is sufficient for all men. The elect of God are Christ's own, and He holds them safe against all enemies, to be with Him in all eternity. And all the greater is His boldness for this request, since they were given to Him, because the Father loved His Son from eternity, before the foundation of the world was laid. And the consummation of Christian blessedness will be the share of the believers, according to this prayer of the Lord, since they will see the glory of their Redeemer; they will behold the head which was once

79) Luther, 8, 821.

crowned with thorns adorned with everlasting honor as the eternal Son of God with power. That is the final goal of faith, the final purpose of the election of grace — eternal life, eternal glory in and with Christ.[80])

The conclusion of the prayer: V. 25. **O righteous Father, the world hath not known Thee; but I have known Thee, and these have known that Thou hast sent Me. V. 26. And I have declared unto them Thy name, and will declare it, that the love wherewith Thou hast loved Me may be in them and I in them.** It is the righteous Father whom Christ is addressing, and therefore He who fulfilled all righteousness may well expect from Him the hearing of a prayer based upon the complete redemption of the world. The unbelieving world does not know the Father, and will not know the Father. But the fact that the Son knows Him will effect the granting of this petition, and the fact that the believers place their trust in the Son's mission and atonement places them in a position which will insure the hearing of the prayer. Their faith and their understanding is of the right kind and results in the intimate relationship upon which they base their hope. The teaching of Christ by which He revealed the name, the Word, and the will of the Father has not been in vain. This work of Christ will continue also in the state of exaltation, through the preaching of His disciples, until the end of time. And wherever the name of God is preached, there His honor and glory will be exalted. "And mark that He not only says: I have declared unto them Thy name, but also adds: And I will declare it, that is, I not only want to have a beginning and let it go at that, but I want to continue always, and do that same thing without ceasing, both through Word and Spirit, that people seek nothing else or higher, but always have enough to do to grasp it better and more strongly. For therein lies the power that we learn to know the Father well through faith, in such a way that the heart full of consolation and with happy trust in all mercy will stand before Him, and fear no wrath." [81]) In this way only will the final object of Christ's salvation be realized, namely, that the love of the Father in Christ dwells in the believers, and Christ Himself is united with them for all eternity. The entire prayer of Christ is a wonderful expression of His love.

Summary. *Christ, in His sacerdotal prayer, prays first of all for His own glorification, then for His present disciples, and finally for the future believers, asking that the gracious power of God may be manifested for their union here on earth and in the final consummation of glory and bliss in heaven.*

80) Cp. *Theol. Quart.*, Oct., 1915; Jan., 1916.

81) Luther, 8, 843.

CHAPTER 18.

The Arrest of Jesus. John 18, 1—14.

Across the Kidron to Gethsemane: V. 1: **When Jesus had spoken these words, He went forth with His disciples over the brook Cedron, where was a garden, into the which He entered and His disciples. V. 2. And Judas also, which betrayed Him, knew the place; for Jesus ofttimes resorted thither with His disciples. V. 3. Judas, then, having received a band of men and officers from the chief priests and Pharisees, cometh thither with lanterns and torches and weapons.** Whether Jesus addressed His last discourses to His disciples and spoke His great sacerdotal prayer in the courtyard of the house where He had celebrated the Passover or on the way out of the city is immaterial. But now it is expressly stated that He went out, He left the city, with His disciples. He took the way which His ancestor David had once taken in his flight from Jerusalem, through the deep and dark ravine of the brook Kidron, which was a winter-torrent, flowing only in winter or during the rainy season. "Kidron we call in our language a black or dark brook; and the brook Kidron is situated near the city of Jerusalem; is not large, but flows only when it rains; has the name Kidron for this reason, because it is located so deep and dark, is lined with bushes and hedges, that the water can hardly be seen because of them. . . . The evangelist means to say Christ went over the true dark brook, yea, in my opinion He went over the black brook. He says nothing of the Mount of Olives and of the beautiful pleasant place, but refers only to this dark brook, as the one that fits best to this matter of the arrest and death of Christ." [82]) On the eastern side of this ravine, on the lower slopes of the Mount of Olives, there was a garden, Gethsemane, into which Jesus entered with His disciples. The evangelist expressly states that Judas, the traitor, was well acquainted with the location of this garden, as well as with the habit of Jesus of frequenting this secluded spot, where He might, at least in a measure, enjoy a few hours' rest and respite occasionally. Note that Jesus, as Luther remarks, neither sought the cross, nor did He flee from it; He entered into His Passion willingly, but He did not challenge martyrdom. Here at Gethsemane it was that the Lord was seized with the terror of death, that He battled with His Father in prayer, that His very blood was driven through

82) Luther, 8, 849.

His pores by the intensity of His suffering, but that He also gained the strength and courage bravely to face further suffering. Meanwhile Judas, who surmised that Jesus might choose this place of retirement, had made arrangements for His capture. There was a part of the Roman band, of the cohort, or garrison, of the Castle Antonia: they represented the government. In addition to these men, whom the Sadducees had probably obtained to prevent the risk of a popular uprising, there were men of the Temple-guard and servants of the Sanhedrin. This whole band, composed of such manifold and diverse elements, was led by Judas, and was well supplied with torches, both such as were made of resinous wood and such as burned oil and were more like lanterns. They wanted to be equipped for every emergency, even this, that Jesus might try to hide in the thickets of the ravine. Judas here appears as an enemy of Christ. He is the traitor that has betrayed to the Jews the place where Jesus might be found. He himself is the leader of the band, a despicable creature even in the eyes of his temporary cronies.

An exhibition of divine majesty: V. 4. **Jesus, therefore, knowing all things that should come upon Him, went forth, and said unto them, Whom seek ye?** V. 5. **They answered Him, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus saith unto them, I am He. And Judas also, which betrayed Him, stood with them.** V. 6. **As soon, then, as He had said unto them, I am He, they went backward, and fell to the ground.** V. 7. **Then asked He them again, Whom seek ye? And they said, Jesus of Nazareth.** V. 8. **Jesus answered, I have told you that I am He; if therefore ye seek Me, let these go their way;** v. 9. **that the saying might be fulfilled which He spake, Of them which Thou gavest Me have I lost none.** The members of the band might have saved themselves a great deal of trouble, for the hour of Jesus had now come, and He voluntarily delivered Himself into their hands. He knew all things that were to happen to Him, and went out to meet the men that were seeking Him. He was not only the omniscient God, knowing everything that was to happen to Him, but He was also the almighty God, as they were shortly to find out. From the description of John the rôles of pursuers and pursued might have been reversed. For it is Jesus that challenges the band: Whom seek ye? Their answer is: Jesus the Nazarene. And Jesus, with inimitable dignity and impressiveness, answers: I am He. A wonderful, encompassing confession! "In considering this word, 'I am He,' the Christians should mark well who Christ is, what His will is, what His intention is, and how great He is that was captured by the Jews, crucified, and killed; and also, why Christ suffered thus and died. This serves to make a distinction between the suffering of Christ and that of all other saints. For when this distinction is made, then the Passion of Christ has value and transcends that of all prophets, apostles, martyrs, etc. But if you ask who Christ is, then you shall know that He is the Man who shortly before, in the previous chapter, v. 10, says: Father, all Mine are Thine, and Thine are Mine." 83) As Jesus made His ringing confession, Judas, the traitor, as the evangelist especially remarks, stood with them. He had joined their ranks, he had cast his lot with the enemies of the Lord. And therefore the almighty power of this great confession struck also him, with the whole band: they all went backward and fell to the ground. Here was evidence of Christ's divine majesty, which should have served to open their eyes as to the real nature of the Man whom they were trying to arrest. With all their torches and lamps and weapons of diverse shapes and kinds they could not stand before Christ, a single word out of whose mouth threw them into a heap. Having given this evidence of His almighty power, Jesus again sends forth His ringing challenge: Whom seek ye? He now hid the rays of His divine majesty, He once more became the lowly, humble man. The truculent answer of the enemies must have been given all the more grudgingly as they felt themselves inferior to this Man. And Jesus again designated Himself as the Man whom they were seeking; He voluntarily delivered Himself into their hands. But to the last He held His guarding and sheltering hand over His disciples, reminding the officers and leaders of the band that, by their own statement, they are instructed to arrest none but Himself. His disciples therefore should be given leave to go their way unchallenged. In doing this, the evangelist finds that Jesus was carrying out the words of His prayer of but a short hour ago, chap. 17, 12. "The evangelist here indicates that Christ with these words speaks of a being lost temporally. Above, in the 17th chapter, v. 12, the text says clearly that the Lord speaks of a being lost eternally. But these two texts are not opposed to each other, though it certainly might seem that way; for if the disciples had been taken captive at that time, they would have been lost eternally in body and soul. There Christ is their Patron and Protector with the word, 'I am He,' and that He says to the band, 'Let these go their way.' With these words He preserved them that they might be lost neither temporally nor eternally; and in their soul they remain safe forever, although they afterwards in due time had to yield their bodies, and were obliged to give glory to God by their death." 84) Note: The tender kindness of Christ is concerned about all His believers in the same way, and it is ever active, and effectively so, in our interest.

83) Luther, 8, 856.
84) Luther, 8, 866.

The arrest: V. 10. **Then Simon Peter, having a sword, drew it, and smote the high priest's servant, and cut off his right ear. The servant's name was Malchus.** V. 11. **Then said Jesus unto Peter, Put up thy sword into the sheath; the cup which My Father hath given Me, shall I not drink it?** V. 12. **Then the band and the captain and officers of the Jews took Jesus, and bound Him,** v. 13. **and led Him away to Annas first; for he was father-in-law to Caiaphas, which was the high priest that same year.** V. 14. **Now Caiaphas was he which gave counsel to the Jews that it was expedient that one man should die for the people.** At this point the impetuosity of Peter, together with His just anger at the audacity of the band in daring to threaten his Master, overwhelmed Him. He drew the sword with which he had provided himself, Luke 22, 38, and struck out at the foremost of the band, the one standing nearest to him, the servant of the high priest, whose name was Malchus. The blow was delivered with sufficient force to sever the man's right ear from his head. But Jesus sternly reproved Peter for this interference with the counsel of God. He bade him put back the sword into its sheath. The Lord's method of defending Himself was not by means of weapons of this world. Any unauthorized use of power, especially in the interest of Christ and His Word, is sternly frowned down by Jesus. "Against such doctrine and apparent show of right this example of Peter should be alleged, to say that there is a great difference between him to whom a matter is committed, and him to whom it is not committed. . . . What God wants He has sufficiently commanded and ordered. God does not sleep, neither is He a fool; He knows very well how the government shall be carried on. Therefore, in things that are not committed to thee let the sword alone." 85) Jesus wanted to drink the cup of suffering which His Father was now offering Him to drink. This attitude, that of willing obedience, was essential for the entire work of redemption. After this incident there was no more delay. The Roman soldiers, under the orders of their tribune, together with the leaders of the Sanhedrin that had come along, made the arrest, with all the show of authority as though they had a dangerous criminal to deal with. The band then took Jesus away to Hannas first, who, although no longer high priest, having held that office by annual appointment from A. D. 7—14, was still a man of commanding influence, and the father-in-law of the high priest of that year, Caiaphas. The palace of the high priests probably formed a complex of buildings about a square, or court, in an architecture which was half Jewish, half Roman, Hannas occupying the one side of the buildings and Caiaphas the other. To the rooms of Hannas Jesus was led first, partly out of deference to his station, partly in order to keep Him there for a preliminary examination, until the members of the Sanhedrin might all be called together. The evangelist identifies Caiaphas as the man who had made the prophecy, all unknown to himself, concerning the fact that Jesus should die for the people. As Luther says, Caiaphas was, in this case, much like the beast of Balaam, through whose mouth the Lord also spoke. Jesus truly was to die, not only for this people, who were His murderers, but for the sins of the whole world.

85) Luther, 8, 869.

Jesus Arraigned, and the Denial of Peter.

John 18, 15—27.

The first denial: V. 15. **And Simon Peter followed Jesus, and so did another disciple; that disciple was known unto the high priest, and went in with Jesus into the palace of the high priest.** V. 16. **But Peter stood at the door without. Then went out that other disciple, which was known unto the high priest, and spake unto her that kept the door, and brought in Peter.** V. 17. **Then saith the damsel that kept the door unto Peter, Art not thou also one of this man's disciples? He saith, I am not.** V. 18. **And the servants and officers stood there, who had made a fire of coals; for it was cold; and they warmed themselves. And Peter stood with them, and warmed himself.** As Jesus was led away from Gethsemane, all the disciples having left Him according to His prophecy, there were two of their number that stopped in their flight and turned to follow the captors of Jesus at a distance. One of these men was Simon Peter; the other is not mentioned by name, but it was very likely John himself, of whom there is other evidence that he was well acquainted with the Temple, its appointments, its usages, and its officers. It is possible that John was related to Caiaphas. This fact gave him immediate access to the palace of the high priest. The entrance opened upon the court, around which the residence was built, and the word was often used to designate the entire palace. Though the high priest's palace now officially belonged to Caiaphas, Hannas still had his apartments there. Peter, who was not known to the household, was not admitted to the court. But John soon missed his companion, and, returning to the door, gave the janitress some assurance as to Peter's character, and thus gained admission for him. But as Peter stepped into the circle of light shed by the fire, the doorkeeper had an opportunity to look at him closely. And, probably without any serious intention, she asked him the question: Are you also one of this man's disciples? And smoothly and glibly the lie rolled from Peter's lips: I am not. The denial had been uttered so thoughtlessly that Peter's conscience may have pricked him only a little, causing him to move

back to some distance from the servants and guards that were assembled in the court. Nevertheless he did not leave. The fire which the house servants and the Sanhedrin ministers had kindled in the open section of the palace's court was most pleasant on this cool spring night, and so Peter gradually edged up more closely, also for the purpose of finding out the trend of the remarks. Note: It is always foolish and often dangerous for a disciple of Christ to join the ranks of gossiping unbelievers. If one's faith is challenged when engaged in the exercise of his duty, the defense may be swift and sure, but when one affiliates himself with his enemies, half the defense is taken away in advance.

The preliminary hearing: V. 19. **The high priest then asked Jesus of His disciples and of His doctrine.** V. 20. **Jesus answered him, I spake openly to the world; I ever taught in the synagog and in the Temple, whither the Jews always resort; and in secret have I said nothing.** V. 21. **Why askest thou Me? Ask them which heard Me what I have said unto them; behold, they know what I said.** V. 22. **And when He had thus spoken, one of the officers which stood by struck Jesus with the palm of his hand, saying, Answerest Thou the high priest so?** V. 23. **Jesus answered him, If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil; but if well, why smitest thou Me?** V. 24. **Now Annas had sent Him bound unto Caiaphas, the high priest.** While they were waiting for the members of the Sanhedrin to assemble for an extraordinary session, Hannas, who is here called high priest by courtesy, as a former incumbent of the office, had a preliminary, private hearing with Jesus. He asked Jesus about His disciples and about His teaching. The information might be of value in several respects. He may have wanted to get the names of the disciples for future use, and a summary of Christ's teaching in order to garble the information to suit his ends. Or Hannas may simply have wanted to find out whether Jesus was making disciples as simple rabbi or as avowed Messiah. In either event the answer of the Lord was to be used against Him in the trial. And therefore Jesus very properly referred Hannas to His plain and open speaking before the whole world. He had spoken without reserve to anybody and everybody that cared to hear. Both in synagogs and in the Temple, wherever occasion offered, the Lord had taught, where all the Jews regularly assembled. Nothing had He spoken in secret. This applies even to such speeches as He had made in the presence of His disciples only, for even at such times He had taught them facts which they were to reveal to the world at the proper time. Christ's public doctrine contained everything that any person needed to come to a conclusion regarding His person and office. "But that Christ occasionally taught His disciples something privately, that does not concern His office of teaching and His public preaching; the office of teaching is public, for He had preached and taught publicly in the boat, on the land, on the mountains, in the synagogs, and in the Temple. In addition, He instructed His disciples privately and apart. Both, then, is true, namely, that Christ taught publicly and privately, but thus that His private teaching might also become public and nothing remain in a corner, nor in hiding." 86) It was a just demand of the Lord's, therefore, that Hannas at this time apply to those that heard His preaching and hear their testimony. Jesus does not want to repeat here what He had so often taught and testified to. Three years and more He had attended to this part of His office; now the time had come to suffer and die. Note: In the kingdom of Christ everything has its time, also public teaching and preaching. If in some country, where the Word has been established, the majority of the people refuse to listen, then Christ begins to withdraw the pure preaching and takes His Gospel elsewhere. If a person therefore neglects preaching and the Word, he will have to account for his contempt with a severe reckoning. Such a one may in the hour of his death desire to hear of the one thing needful, and will find himself without the comfort of the Gospel. God is not mocked! When Jesus rebuked the former high priest with these words, one of the servants of the Sanhedrin that was standing near by had the impudence to slap Jesus in the face with his flat hand, a cowardly and unjustified blow. He even accompanied his unwarranted outrage with an explanation in the form of the question: Thus dost Thou answer the high priest? But Jesus did not take this blow without a word of reproof for the cowardly servant. If He had spoken evil, the servant should bear witness to that effect, and not undertake to administer a punishment without authority. And again, if His defense had been right and good, how could he dare to strike in such an unwarranted manner? It was a calm, reasonable, but conclusive rebuke, and in no wise out of harmony with the teaching of Jesus concerning the turning of the other cheek. A disciple of Christ will suffer the wrong, as Christ also did, but he may and should under circumstances reprove the injustice. "That He says to the servant: If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil, you must understand thus, that there is a great difference between these two, to turn the other cheek and to rebuke with words him that smites us thus. Christ should suffer, but just the same the word is put into His mouth, that He should speak and rebuke what is wrong." 87) Meanwhile the purpose of the waiting had been realized, and the trial in the hall of Caiaphas could begin. Therefore Hannas now sent Jesus from

86) Luther, 8, 889.
87) Luther, 8, 892.

his apartments to those of Caiaphas. The Sanhedrin, the spiritual court of the Jews, had convened, and the formal examination could now take place.

Peter's second and third denial: V. 25. **And Simon Peter stood and warmed himself. They said therefore unto him, Art not thou also one of His disciples? He denied it and said, I am not.** V. 26. **One of the servants of the high priest, being his kinsman whose ear Peter cut off, saith, Did not I see thee in the garden with Him?** V. 27. **Peter then denied again; and immediately the cock crew.** While the hearing was going on in the chambers of Hannas, Peter had remained in the circle of the servants and guards near the fire. That was foolhardiness, for he that wilfully courts temptation and danger usually finds himself overwhelmed by the danger. The first time Peter had denied on account of the mocking question of the doorkeeper. Her suspicions had meanwhile been transmitted to the other servants, especially through the agency of a second janitress. A number of them now turned to Peter with searching questions as to his connection with the prisoner in the hall. The specific accusation was that Peter was a disciple of Christ. Peter denied for the second time. But the suspicion continued. One remark led to another, the dialect of Peter came in for its measure of attention. Finally a kinsman of Malchus, the man whose ear Peter had cut off in the garden, told him pointblank that he had seen him with Jesus in the garden. Peter was driven into a corner and had no weapon left with which to defend himself. He blasphemously reiterated his denial, — and then the time of cock-crowing came. He had entirely overheard the first signal of warning, but now was brought back to his senses. Note: The familiarity of the evangelist with affairs in the house of the high priest is indicated also in this section by his knowledge of relationships. Mark also: A repeated denial, such as that of Peter in this case, results in loss of faith. It may happen, under regrettable circumstances, that a person, being thrown into the company of scoffers, may deny his Lord by word or deed, and still retain his faith. But if such a denial is done repeatedly without heeding the warnings of conscience, then there is no chance for Christianity to remain in the heart. That was Peter's condition at that moment; if he had died during the time of the third denial, he would have been lost. But the Lord had His disciple in mind and called him back to faith through a sincere repentance.

The Trial before Pilate. John 18, 28—40.

The arraignment before Pilate: V. 28. **Then led they Jesus from Caiaphas unto the hall of judgment; and it was early. And they themselves went not into the judgment-hall, lest they should be defiled, but that they might eat the Passover.** V. 29. **Pilate then went out unto them and said, What accusation bring ye against this Man?** V. 30. **They answered and said unto him, If He were not a malefactor, we would not have delivered Him up unto thee.** V. 31. **Then said Pilate unto them, Take ye Him, and judge Him according to your Law. The Jews therefore said unto him, It is not lawful for us to put any man to death;** v. 32. **that the saying of Jesus might be fulfilled which He spake, signifying what death He should die.** The remaining hours of the night, after cock-crowing, brought some rest to the members of the Sanhedrin, after their mock trial in the palace of Caiaphas, Matt. 26, 57—68, but not to Jesus, with whom the servants had their sport. And hardly did the dawn break over the eastern hills when the Sanhedrin, having confirmed their resolution of the night in a session in the Hall of Polished Stones, led Jesus away to the Praetorium, the governor's palace in Antonia, near the Temple. It was still very early in the morning. The Jews took Jesus to the door of Pilate's palace, thus delivering Him into the power of the Roman governor for the confirmation and execution of their verdict, since they had adjudged Him guilty of death, but no longer possessed the authority to inflict capital punishment. The members of the Sanhedrin were incidentally very careful about their behavior. They did not wish to become defiled in any way by touching anything unclean or by coming into personal contact with Gentiles. They wanted to be Levitically clean for the eating of the second *chagigah*, or sacrifice, of the double festival. For the word Passover is applied not only to the meal of the 14th of Nisan, but to all the sacrificial meals that were prescribed for the seven days of the festival, Deut. 16, 2. 3.; 2 Chron. 30, 22. But the command of God did not go so far as to prohibit the entering into the house of a Gentile at this time. That was one of the traditions of the elders which the Jews observed with such strictness. The entire proceeding gave evidence of the hypocrisy of the Jewish rulers. They did not shrink from committing wanton murder, but transgressing a foolish commandment of their elders was considered a deadly sin. Since the Jews would not enter into the judgment-hall for a formal and customary trial, Pilate came out on the platform before the Praetorium and inquired for the charges against the prisoner. This was a concession on the part of Pilate which the Jews may have construed as a weakness. At any rate, their answer upon his reasonable inquiry was an insolent challenge: If this Man were not a doer of evil, we should not have delivered Him to thee. Their attitude was almost threatening. They had found the prisoner guilty of death, and therefore Pilate should ask no questions, ask neither for evidence nor for testimony, but

simply confirm their decision and have the punishment executed. Pilate therefore replied to them according to their impudent answer. If it was a matter regarding which they had such definite information, if it was a mere matter of the transgression of a ceremonial law and not an affair for the criminal court of the Roman government, then they should act accordingly. They should take the accused and carry out the punishment which their church laws imposed in such cases. The leaders of the Jews answered that their verdict called for capital punishment, for an execution which it was not in their power to carry out. Their own consciences they were quieting with the pretext that they had found Jesus guilty of blasphemy, and before Pilate they were determined to urge the accusation that He was a political criminal, a rebel dangerous to the Roman government. Pilate, on the other hand, had the conviction that the whole affair was a matter of religious controversy, which in no way concerned the Roman government. Thus it happened in the end that Jesus, being handed over into the power of the Roman governor, was crucified, according to the Roman manner of executing. And thereby the prophecy of the Lord was fulfilled, not only that He would be delivered into the hands of the Gentiles, but also that He would die by crucifixion, chap. 12, 32. 33; Matt. 20, 19. Note: The Lord knew every step of the way, was conscious at all times of the things that would happen to Him; His suffering and death were voluntary and therefore of such wonderful value.

Pilate begins the examination of Jesus: V. 33. **Then Pilate entered into the judgment-hall again, and called Jesus, and said unto Him, Art Thou the King of the Jews?** V. 34. **Jesus answered him, Sayest thou this thing of thyself, or did others tell it thee of Me?** V. 35. **Pilate answered, Am I a Jew? Thine own nation and the chief priests have delivered Thee unto me; what hast Thou done?** Having received no definite charges, but only vague intimations from the Jews, Pilate now resolved to give the prisoner a hearing. He took up the case, although he was convinced that Christ was no political criminal. That in itself was an injustice on the part of the governor, to make a case where he did not believe there was a case. But one of the statements of the Jewish rulers had been that Jesus had said that He was the King of the Jews. So Pilate takes up this matter, as one that might lead to some solution. But Jesus asks a very pertinent question in turn: Of thyself sayest thou this, or have others spoken to thee concerning Me? "Do you make this inquiry from any serious personal interest and with any keen apprehension of the blessings attached to the kingdom of God, or are you merely echoing a formal charge brought against Me by others?" 88) "In the first place He excuses Himself thus: Sayest thou this thing of thyself, or did others tell it thee of Me? This seems again as though it were answered in pride; however, it is not a proud answer, but a very necessary defense. For if some one is accused falsely, he should not let the accusation rest upon him nor say: This I will gladly suffer and let remain upon me for God's sake, but should openly protest his innocence. Therefore the Lord throws the guilt and false accusation which the Jews put upon Him far from Himself and says: Thou, Pilate, askest whether I am the King of the Jews, that is to say, whether I am a rebel against the emperor? I call upon thine own conscience as a witness whether thou accusest Me of this of thyself or not. Surely, of thyself thou wouldst not say such things of Me. Let thy conscience answer, yea, let thine own eyes answer. Thou seest Me stand before thee, captured and bound; I was taken in no tumult, and there is no crowd of people about Me that uses weapons, but I have altogether the aspect of a captured and bound person. Therefore I cannot be accused of insurrection against the emperor. Thus the Lord presents His innocence over against the false accusation of the Jews, calling upon both the conscience and the eyes of the judge for a witness." 89) The very implication that he might have had the idea which he broached himself, Pilate rejects with a show almost of loathing: I surely am no Jew! But the people to whom Jesus belonged by birth, the Jews and the chief priests, had delivered Him. And with some asperity Pilate wanted to know what the whole trouble was about, what Jesus had committed to be brought before Him in this manner. The idea that he should take any stock in a Jewish Messiah, Pilate scouts with sneering mockery.

The defense of Jesus: V. 36. **Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world; if My kingdom were of this world, then would My servants fight that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now is My kingdom not from hence.** V. 37. **Pilate therefore said unto Him, Art Thou a king, then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth My voice.** V. 38. **Pilate saith unto Him, What is truth? And when he had said this, he went out again unto the Jews, and saith unto them, I find in Him no fault at all.** V. 39. **But ye have a custom that I should release unto you one at the Passover; will ye, therefore, that I release unto you the King of the Jews?** V. 40. **Then cried they all again, saying, Not this man, but Barabbas. Now Barabbas was a robber.** After having protested against the false understand-

88) *Expositor's Greek Testament*, 1, 851.

89) Luther, 8, 908.

ing of His claim which the Jews had brought in the form of a charge against Him, Jesus now proceeds to explain to Pilate in what sense the appellation "king" might well be applied to Him. His words amount to a wonderful confession regarding the spiritual kingdom of which He is the head. Christ's kingdom, His Church, is not of this world; it neither had its origin in the world, nor has it the nature and manner and characteristics of the world. It is no temporal kingdom; it is a spiritual, a heavenly kingdom. Christ's kingdom and the kingdoms, the governments, of the world are two entirely different things, which should never be confused or commingled. In this respect both Calvinism and Roman Catholicism, as well as any form of direct influence of the religious bodies on legislation, except to ward off unwarranted laws that would interfere with the free exercise of religion, are wrong. Christ's proof for His statement lies in this, that His servants, His followers, if His kingdom were of this world, would, at the present time, take up arms in His defense and deliver Him from the hands of the Jews. But He had deliberately hindered any such demonstration, because His kingdom is not of this world. Pilate now wanted a definite answer, in order to form some sort of judgment as to Christ's claim. He exclaims: Then you are a king, just the same! He still hoped to find some justification for his act, in case he should feel compelled to accede to the demands of the Jews. Jesus patiently explains to Pilate the nature of His kingship and the character of His kingdom. Pilate's exclamation was fully justified, because He was and is in truth a king. But lest the governor misunderstand, Jesus plainly states the object of His coming into the world. For this purpose was He born and for this aim came He into the world, to bear witness of the truth, in the interest of eternal, unchanging truth. The truth which has been revealed in Christ is the grace of God in Him, the Redeemer of the world. To this fact Jesus is to testify, thereby becoming the King of Truth, who establishes and expands His kingdom by means of the Word of Truth; He reigns through the Word. This is true of Him and of His ministers at all times. "In these days it happens to us also: Should we be silent regarding the truth and not reprove the lies, then we might well remain. But since we open our mouth, confess the truth, and condemn the lies, every one wants to get at us. We preach no one but Christ, that no one is saved by himself; if it were possible for us to be saved in ourselves, it would not have been necessary for God to send His Son; but since God was obliged to send His Son, it certainly follows that we in ourselves are not able to be saved; that is our preaching and the truth, to which we bear witness." 90) It also follows from the facts which Christ states concerning Himself and the object of His coming into the world that only he that is of the truth, that has been born out of the truth, can and will hear His voice. Only he that has been born anew out of the Word of Truth has the power to give evidence of the truth that is in him. The truth, then, will be the element of such a person; he will live and move and have his being in the truth. He will then also listen to the voice of Christ, the Champion of truth; he will be an obedient citizen of the kingdom of Christ. It is thus evident that the kingdom of Jesus has an entirely different character, an entirely different object than any kingdom or government in the world. Pilate immediately realized and felt this from the explanation of Jesus. Pilate, acquainted with the efforts of the Greek and Roman philosophers to fix truth on the basis of human reason, thought it foolish, in his skeptical mind, for any one to claim the knowledge of truth as his possession. So he put the jeering question: What is truth? and immediately went out to the Jews and announced to them the result of his investigation, that he found no fault in that man Christ. There was no cause, no reason, for criminal procedure. Note: The position of Pilate is shared by a great many so-called wise and cultured people of this world. They care nothing for the truth, the divine truth, the infallible Word of God. The speculations of foolish philosophers have a higher value in their idea, as gropings after the truth, than the truth of Scriptures. If they at some time or other hear the truth, they turn away from its inviting voice and continue in their sins.

Pilate should now have made an end of the farce, to which he had made far too great concessions as it was. But he was a coward at heart, and the people felt this hesitation. In order to save himself from a disagreeable concession, he now tried to divert the minds of the people into a different channel. He reminded them of a custom which obtained, that they might ask for the release of some prisoner at the Passover. And so he gave them the choice between one Barabbas and Jesus, whom he calls the King of the Jews, thereby only adding new fuel to the fire of hatred that was already raging. The leaders of the Jews had figured on this contingency long before, and had instructed the members of the mob accordingly. The very offer of Pilate was another injustice. For since Jesus had not been convicted in a single point, it was foolish to speak of a deliverance and mercy in His case.. Barabbas the people wanted and no one else, and the vacillation of Pilate played into their hands. The evangelist here adds the note: But Barabbas was a robber and murderer. "Barabbas was a rebel and a murderer, captured during a tumult, and had committed murder in a revolt of the people; and this was not only known throughout the city, but Barabbas had been taken in the act, and by

90) Luther, 8, 912.

Pilate, as the proper government, thrown into prison. But Jesus was just and innocent, so that His accusers, the Jews, could not attach any wrong to Him. Pilate then, following his own line of reasoning, concludes thus: Since this Jesus did nothing wrong, the Jews will be obliged to ask that I release Him. And again, since Barabbas is a well-known rebel and murderer, the Jews will have to demand that I deal with him according to justice. Thus Pilate reasons as a rational heathen. But the devil turns about and says: Not so, but release to us the rebel and murderer Barabbas, but crucify the righteous and innocent Jesus." 91) Pilate

91) Luther, 8, 916.

and the Jewish leaders are here on the same plane, just as the enemies of Christ in our days may be divided into two classes, both of them hostile to the Word: some consider the Christian religion nothing but a harmless fanaticism, others insist that its adherents are dangerous to the state. And in either case they act upon their conviction, as recent events have plainly shown.

Summary. *Jesus is captured in Gethsemane and taken, first before Hannas, then before the Sanhedrin, under the chairmanship of Caiaphas, while Peter denies Him three times; in the morning He is taken to the judgment-hall of Pilate, where He testifies concerning His kingdom.*

CHAPTER 19.

The Condemnation of Jesus.

John 19, 1—16a.

The scourging of Jesus: V. 1. **Then Pilate therefore took Jesus and scourged Him.** V. 2. **And the soldiers platted a crown of thorns, and put it on His head; and they put on Him a purple robe** v. 3. **and said, Hail, King of the Jews! And they smote Him with their hands.** V. 4. **Pilate therefore went forth again and saith unto them, Behold, I bring Him forth to you that ye may know that I find no fault in Him.** V. 5. **Then came Jesus forth, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. And Pilate saith unto them, Behold the Man!** V. 6. **When the chief priests, therefore, and officers saw Him, they cried out, saying, Crucify Him, crucify Him! Pilate saith unto them, Take ye Him and crucify Him; for I find no fault in Him.** Just as Pilate, throughout the proceedings, had shown himself a weak and vacillating fool, without the faintest sense of justice and firmness, so he continued in the last part of the trial, which was momentarily becoming a greater farce and travesty upon justice. He had declared his belief in the innocence of Christ, and yet he commits the crying injustice of having the prisoner scourged. It was a mere whim on his part, in order to placate the Jews and win their approval. He cherished the vain hope that they might be satisfied with the small punishment which he thereby meted out. It is a wrong policy to agree to a lesser injustice in order to avoid a greater and more serious. If one has the choice of two evils and then chooses the lesser, that is perfectly legitimate. But if a person loads his conscience with the guilt of a lesser sin in order possibly to avoid the greater, it must always be condemned. Thus it was with the scourging of Christ. This in itself was indescribable torture, for the prisoner was bowed down and fastened to a whipping-post, whereupon the naked back was cut to pieces with a scourge braided at one end, but with the loose strands weighted with small leaden spheres and sometimes with hooks, in order to lacerate the back more thoroughly. And the soldiers, in whose hands the prisoner was for the time being, were not satisfied with even this terrible cruelty, but invented a game of their own which they played with the uncomplaining Christ. Having braided or plaited a ring or crown of thorns, they pressed it down upon His head, causing the sharp points to penetrate through the tender skin into the sensitive flesh. To complete the mockery, they took an old purple mantle, which they may have found in some wardrobe, and threw it about Him. And finally they bowed their knees in mock homage, and hailed Him as the King of the Jews. It was a form of blasphemy calculated also to express their contempt of the Jews. Tiring finally of their blasphemous sport, they rained blows upon His head and body, partly from cruelty, partly from resentment, since He bore everything with divine patience. He gave His back to the smiters, and His cheeks to them that plucked off the hair; He hid not His face from shame and spitting, Is. 50, 6. He suffered without complaint, as the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world. Pilate himself, seeing the result of the soldiers' cruel jest, was moved. He hoped that this exhibition would satisfy the Jews, and that he might now dismiss Jesus, Luke 23, 16. Going ahead of Jesus, he announced to the Jews that he was bringing out the prisoner to show them that he found no fault in Him. And then he stepped aside for the Man with the crown of thorns and the faded purple robe, merely pointing to the Lord with the words: Behold the Man! It was a view well calculated to impress a sentimental crowd, but here was a mob dominated by hatred, upon whom the sight of blood merely had the effect of enraging them all the more. With the chief priests and the guards of the Temple leading them and stirring them up to ever new efforts, the people bellowed forth

their demand: Crucify, crucify! "That is the world. In the first place, she cannot endure the righteous and innocent. In the second place, she prefers the rebel and murderer Barabbas to Christ, the Preacher of truth. Those are hard and coarse knots. But the third is much coarser, that the dear, loving world still has not enough nor is satisfied, although the truth is punished to some extent. The Jews are not satisfied, neither will they desist in their forcing of Pilate and crying over Jesus, though Jesus, the Preacher of truth, is whipped and scourged." 92) And the leaders of the mob knew just how to keep the bloodthirstiness at the highest point. The repetition of the one word, "Crucify!" in endless monotony had the object of deadening all remonstrances and stifling all opposition. Pilate, full of helpless indignation, in obvious despair, tries to shake off all responsibility, reiterating his statement that he finds no cause or fault in Jesus. But the time to reason and argue was long past. What could the lone man who had demonstrated his weakness do against the ceaseless droning of that one word, dinned into his ears with maddening regularity? Note: In withstanding wrong, it is always foolish and suicidal to make concessions. Far better to be martyred in the right cause than to yield in matters pertaining to conscience and plainly laid down in the Word of God.

Pilate again examines Jesus: V. 7. **The Jews answered him, We have a Law, and by our Law He ought to die, because He made Himself the Son of God.** V. 8. **When Pilate therefore heard that saying, he was the more afraid,** v. 9. **and went again into the judgment-hall, and saith unto Jesus, Whence art Thou? But Jesus gave him no answer.** V. 10. **Then saith Pilate unto Him, Speakest Thou not unto me? Knowest Thou not that I have power to crucify Thee, and have power to release Thee?** V. 11. **Jesus answered, Thou couldest have no power at all against Me, except it were given thee from above; therefore he that delivered Me unto thee hath the greater sin.** V. 12a. **And from thenceforth Pilate sought to release Him.** When Pilate made his declaration before the people of his belief in the innocence of Jesus, they stopped their noisy demonstration just long enough to give him an answer which was intended to bring his superstitious heart into further subjection. They calmly stated to him that they had a Law, and that according to that Law it was necessary that Jesus die. It was intended to impress Pilate and to browbeat him into submission, by playing upon his superstition. Unwittingly the Jews here uttered a great truth, as their high priest had done a short time before. It was indeed necessary that Jesus die, but not for any guilt of His own. "Mark here that the innocence of Christ, our Lord, stands for our guilt. For though He was condemned to death being innocent, He yet is guilty before God according to the Law; not for His person, but for our persons. He stands before Pilate, not as the son of the Virgin Mary, but as a malefactor; and that not for Himself, but for thee and for me. . . . Thus Christ for His own person is innocent, but being in our stead, He is guilty, for He has taken our part to pay our guilt." 93) The emphasis of the Jews was now upon that one point which had aroused the hypocrites to the highest pitch of pretended indignation, namely, that He had made Himself the Son of God. Their manner implied that they considered His claim to be altogether unfounded, but one that for that very reason merited punishment. It was a point which had no value from the standpoint of the Jews, who were attempting to show that Jesus was a dangerous rebel. "Such accusation of blasphemy toward God had no weight with Pilate, since he knew nothing of the Law of the Jews; and even if the Jews had gained this point and truly had fixed this upon Christ that He had blasphemed God, yet Pilate might have said: Why do you Jews act contrary to your own Law? Your Law commands that a blasphemer should be stoned, and not crucified; but now you cry that I should crucify this man, although crucifying is not the penalty of blasphemy, also according to your Law. Therefore the Jews are again raving and foolish, and are caught. For thus it will happen to all enemies of God that oppose the truth, that they are always caught in their own rascality." 94) But for us there is a world of comfort in that fact, that Jesus suffered and died as the Son of God. That gives to His Passion the real, lasting worth. The Jews, in their anxiety to force Pilate into submission, almost spoiled their own object. For the effect of their statement concerning the claim of Christ was to make him afraid of the punishment of the gods, if he should carry out the demand of the Jews. So he once more entered the hall and had a second interview with Jesus. He wanted to know whether there were any truth to the statement as to His being of divine origin. The question, blunt as it sounds, must have been spoken also with a certain amount of awe. The silence of Jesus said more strongly than words might have done that the whole trial was a blasphemous farce. Jesus had given testimony concerning Himself, as the King of truth, and Pilate had rejected the words, treated them with contempt. But the silence of Jesus enraged the proud, supercilious Roman, who now sought to impress this poor prisoner with the greatness of his power over Him. That this Man would not answer him, the governor, who, in his belief, had absolute power over His life, was almost unbelievable.

92) Luther, 8, 921.

93) Luther, 8, 932.

94) Luther, 8, 928.

But the calm answer of Jesus pointed out to him his limits: Not wouldest thou have any power over Me if it had not been given to thee from above. Jesus was under divine direction to carry out the divine obligation resting upon Him. God's purposes were being carried out in the present trial, and not a weak man's whims and fancies. The greater blame rested with the Jews that had delivered the Lord into the hands of the Gentiles; their sin and guilt was of a nature that would bring them temporal and eternal destruction. "Here thou seest that Christ judges the work according to the heart and not according to outward seeming and appearance. Pilate commits a sin in having Christ crucified, though he finds no cause of death in Him. But since his heart is not so evil as that of Caiaphas and the high priests, therefore his sin is not so great as the sin of Caiaphas and the high priests." 95) Such was the impression that Pilate gained from this interview that he sought more than ever, although without result, to release the Lord. But as Jesus had told him, the matter was no longer in his hands, but in that of a higher power.

The condemnation: V. 12b. **But the Jews cried out, saying, If thou let this Man go, thou art not Caesar's friend; whosoever maketh himself a king speaketh against Caesar. V. 13. When Pilate therefore heard that saying, he brought Jesus forth, and sat down in the judgment-seat in a place that is called the Pavement, but in the Hebrew, Gabbatha. V. 14. And it was the preparation of the Passover and about the sixth hour; and he saith unto the Jews, Behold your King! V. 15. But they cried out, Away with Him, away with Him, crucify Him! Pilate saith unto them, Shall I crucify your King? The chief priests answered, We have no king but Caesar. V. 16a. Then delivered he Him therefore unto them to be crucified.** While Pilate was considering ways and means to effect the release of Jesus, the leaders of the Jews had not been idle. They now gave a new turn to the case by having the mob cry out to Pilate: If thou releasest this man, thou art not friendly to Caesar. Their argument ran along these lines: Jesus had declared Himself to be a king; that implied a rebellious disposition, if not actual insurrection, rebellion against the Roman emperor, against the constituted authority. If Pilate now took the part of the prisoner, he would aid and abet, or at least strongly encourage, a rebel, affiliate himself with him, at least morally. This fact, however, would put him under suspicion, if not under accusation, as himself unfriendly to Caesar and the Roman government. The implication of the Jews was, though they did not threaten outright, that they would make a complaint, and effect the loss of his position. Such a veiled threat was bound to have great influence upon a man of Pilate's character, dependent, as he was, upon the mercy of the emperor. And it was the argument which practically decided the day for the Jews. For Pilate now formally led Jesus forth from the judgment-hall and himself sat down upon the judgment-seat, which was situated on an elevated floor or platform of stones, tessellated, or laid out in mosaics, known, on account of this feature, as the Pavement, or, in Hebrew, as Gabbatha, the Elevated Place. It was a strikingly dramatic scene which was here presented, and undoubtedly intentionally so on the part of Pilate. His entire attitude proclaimed that he was ready to administer justice, that he wanted to pronounce his final judgment. The evangelist carefully notes the time when this took place: it was the preparation of the Sabbath, that is, it was Friday, and it was going toward the sixth hour, it was between nine and twelve o'clock, by the general way of reckoning time which was then in vogue. Cp. Mark 15, 25. On this day and at this hour the judgment was spoken upon Christ, whereby the world has been absolved from all guilt and transgression. Pilate appears in this entire matter as an unjust, unwise, weak judge, that plays havoc with justice and attempts to please men, that is not influenced solely by the facts of the case, but is swayed by personal, selfish interests. And his case illustrates also the course of sin. If a person accedes and yields to even the smallest sin against better knowledge, he will soon become the slave of sin and unable to withstand even a small temptation. Of the class of Pilate are those that finally give up all semblance of decent moral living, openly reject Christ and God, and become the willing tools of Satan. The Jews, on the other hand, appear in this story as the determined enemies of Christ. They had hardened their hearts against all influence for good; deliberate, ruthless murder was their avowed intention. And Christ was silent; He endured the horrible outrages without a word of complaint or protest. Pilate vented his bitterness and his baffled rage in the sarcastic, stinging remark: Behold your King! The words were intended to convey all his hatred and contempt for the Jews. That was their own accusation, this was included in their own threat, for this they wanted His execution, that He arrogated to Himself the title "King." A fine picture of a king He made in His present plight! But the sarcasm of Pilate was wasted, if he had intended it in the interest of Christ. For the lust for blood had so inflamed the Jews that they were beyond any rational appeal. Their cry, in maddened fury, broke forth: Away! Away! Crucify Him! Pilate's reply was another feeble attempt at sarcasm: Your king shall I crucify? And the chief priests answered, in a statement of mere form and hypocrisy, to force Pilate into concession: We have no king but Caesar. As a matter of fact, both the Sadducees and the Pharisees, the lead-

95) Luther, 8, 928.

ers of the Jews, hoped for the speedy delivery of the Jews from the sovereignty of the Romans. But they here profess a loyalty which they were far from feeling, in order to force the issue, since their faithfulness to the emperor would stand out in comparison with the hesitation of Pilate, which they would denounce as a wavering in fidelity and devotion to his sovereign. And so Pilate finally permitted the farce to reach its climax, in the condemnation of Christ: he pronounced judgment whereby Jesus was delivered to them, to the leaders of the Jews, not into their hands, but according to their will and desire, to be crucified.

The Crucifixion. John 19, 16b—30.

V. 16b. And they took Jesus, and led Him away. V. 17. And He, bearing His cross, went forth into a place called the place of a skull, which is called in the Hebrew Golgotha; v. 18. where they crucified Him, and two other with Him, on either side one, and Jesus in the midst. V. 19. And Pilate wrote a title, and put it on the cross. And the writing was, JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS. V. 20. This title then read many of the Jews; for the place where Jesus was crucified was nigh to the city; and it was written in Hebrew and Greek and Latin. V. 21. Then said the chief priests of the Jews to Pilate, Write not, The King of the Jews; but that He said, I am the King of the Jews. V. 22. Pilate answered, What I have written I have written. John omits the account of the insults and cruelties which the soldiers inflicted upon Christ. Cp. Matt. 27, 26—30; Mark 15, 16—19. Death by crucifixion was the sentence, the most shameful death known to the Romans, one meted out only to criminals of the worst type. The execution of the sentence was in the hands of the soldiers, who carried it out according to custom, adding such little indignities and cruelties as they might devise on the spur of the moment. They took Jesus along with them, leading Him away from the praetorium. And He was bearing His cross, loaded down with the heavy log that must have hurt the lacerated back most cruelly. Of the relief afforded by the meeting with Simon of Cyrene, John says nothing, since this fact was known from the other gospels. In this way the procession reached a place which, after its shape, was called Calvary, the place of the skull, or, in the Aramaic form of the Hebrew language, Golgotha. Its exact location has never been determined in spite of the many claims that such has been the case. And it is best so, since even now the various denominations that have representatives at the Holy City are in the habit of fighting almost pitched battles over the supposed holy places. There on Calvary the soldiers then crucified Jesus, fastening Him to the cross-arms of the tree of curse and shame by driving nails through His hands and feet. The crucifixion and the torture of being suspended by His own flesh caused excruciating agony. And here the shame and disgrace was intensified and emphasized by the fact that Jesus was placed between two malefactors, men who were guilty of criminal acts and had deserved the penalty of death. Thus Jesus became a malefactor, took the place of the malefactors of the whole world. What we had become guilty of by our sins and transgressions: the greatest shame, curse, and damnation, all this was laid upon Him, in order that we might be free. "Thus Christ was crucified and hanged to the cross as the greatest thief, scoundrel, rebel, and murderer ever seen in the world, and the innocent Lamb, Christ, must bear and pay strange debts; for it is in our interest. Our sins they are that lie upon His neck; we are such sinners, thieves, scoundrels, rebels, and murderers. For though we are not so coarse in our actions, yet such is our state before God. But here Christ comes in our stead, and bears our sins, and pays them, in order that we might receive help. For if we believe in Him, not only we that avoid the outward, coarse sins will be saved through Christ, but also those that fall into coarse, outward sins are saved, if they truly repent and believe in Christ." 96) After Jesus had been crucified, there was some difficulty and discussion concerning the superscription. For Pilate had chosen the version: Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews, as containing the chief accusation against the Lord. Incidentally, this was a form of revenge on the part of Pilate, who regarded Jesus as a harmless fool, and wanted the Jews to feel that such a man was the proper king for them. The leaders of the Jews felt the sting of the words all the more since so many people went by the place of crucifixion, Calvary being near to the city's gates. The fact also that the superscription had been composed by Pilate in the three languages that were in use in Palestine, in Hebrew-Aramaic, which was spoken by the common people, in Greek, which was the language of commerce, and in Latin, which was the language of court and camp, did much to make the matter contained in the words known. The chief priests of the Jews therefore remonstrated with Pilate with the object of having the reading changed to some form which would throw the blame on Jesus, that He had made the claim of being the King of the Jews. As it read, the superscription sounded as though the claim were admitted. But Pilate, with a firmness which would have stood him in good stead a few hours before, a firmness which was here reenforced by obstinacy and stubbornness, absolutely declined to make any change. But in all these things the hand of God must be discerned. It was God's dispensation to have this

96) Luther, 8, 955.

very title placed over the head of Jesus. This Jesus of Nazareth who was crucified by the Jews is in truth the King of the Jews in the best sense of the word, the Messiah of Israel. This Messiah was to bring salvation to all the people of the entire world, whose chief languages were here used. By the torture of His cross and by His bitter death Jesus has atoned fully for the transgressions of the world. And this fact should be made known to all nations on earth, that they might place their trust in their Substitute that died on Calvary.

The soldiers cast lots: V. 23. **Then the soldiers, when they had crucified Jesus, took His garments, and made four parts, to every soldier a part; and also His coat Now the coat was without seam, woven from the top throughout.** V. 24. **They said, therefore, among themselves, Let us not rend it, but cast lots for it whose it shall be, that the scripture might be fulfilled which saith, They parted My raiment among them, and for My vesture they did cast lots. These things, therefore, the soldiers did.** The happenings that transpired under the cross are here recorded by John; first of all what the soldiers did. These men had no personal interest in their victim; their crucifying Him was merely a part of the day's work. And they now proceeded to make use of the privilege accorded them by ancient custom. It seems that the criminals condemned to death by crucifixion were nailed to the cross entirely naked or nearly so, with a loin cloth at the most. So the soldiers took the clothes of Jesus, the upper garment, the girdle, the sandals, perhaps the linen shirt, and divided them into four parts, according to the number of men that had been detailed to tend to this work. But the inner garment, the tunic, remained after all the other articles of wearing apparel had been distributed. This they could not cut up without spoiling it, since it was seamless, unsewed, and woven in one piece from top to bottom, probably the work of loving hands. So the soldiers decided to dispose of it by casting lots; it was made the prize in a game of chance. And here again, as in so many items connected with the Passion-story, the game of chance was not the result of chance, but happened in accordance with the prophecy of the Psalmist, Ps. 22, 18. Of this very incident the Messiah, speaking through the mouth of David, a thousand years before, had said: They divided My garments among themselves, and for My tunic did they cast lots. Here it was plainly indicated, as Luther writes, that Christ had paid the penalty to the full. Everything that He had, His body, His life, His very clothes, He gave up for love of the sinners, in order to earn salvation for them. But the soldiers, gambling as they were under the very cross of their Savior, are a fitting picture of the frivolous world, frittering away its chances of salvation almost in the shadow of the cross which points upward.

Christ's care for His mother: V. 25. **Now there stood by the cross of Jesus His mother and His mother's sister, Mary, the wife of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene.** V. 26. **When Jesus therefore saw His mother, and the disciple standing by whom He loved, He saith unto His mother, Woman, behold thy son!** V. 27. **Then saith He to the disciple, Behold thy mother! And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home.** A beautiful evidence of the Savior's filial love and care! In the midst of the excruciating agonies of the body and the still more horrible tortures of the soul He yet finds time to think of His mother and the duties He owed her in return for her mother's devotion. During the act of crucifixion itself the friends of Jesus naturally stood at some distance, as Matthew and Mark relate. But when matters had quieted down somewhat, these friends, principally women that were proving themselves stauncher and stronger than the apostles in this emergency, approached as near as possible to the cross. Mary, the mother of Jesus, stood there, and her sister, or rather sister-in-law, Mary, the wife of Cleophas, the mother of James, and Mary Magdalene, all of whom were united with the Lord in faith and tender love. Cp. Matt. 27, 56; Mark 15, 40. The punctuation of the text may also be set to mention four women: the mother of Jesus, her sister Salome, Mary, the wife of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene. And of all the apostles there was only one present, the disciple whom Jesus loved, the writer of this account, John himself. Now Jesus, seeing them standing together in their sympathetic sorrow, turned first to His mother, bidding her look upon John as her son, who would take the place of Him that was about to be removed from His position of dutiful son. And in a similar manner He bade John look upon Mary as his mother, to show her all the kindness and care which a son owes to his mother in her old age. And John accepted the charge. Mary was received into his home with all the love which might have made her declining days cheerful, had Jesus remained in the flesh, personally to fulfil the obligations resting upon Him according to the Fourth Commandment which He here kept. John probably had a house in Jerusalem, as tradition has it, and could provide for Mary's care and comfort in a proper manner, treating her altogether as an honored member of the household. Note: The provision of Jesus for His aged mother is an example of the proper fulfilment of the Fourth Commandment. This active obedience of Christ serves for our salvation; He has kept the Law in our stead. It may have seemed a trivial matter at a time when the redemption of millions was at stake, but it characterizes the Savior's love. This Jesus, that died on the cross for us, to save our souls from damnation, will care also for our bodies, will make proper provision for their protection and keeping.

Mark also: The small band of disciples under the cross of Jesus is a picture of the Christian Church. The believers properly belong under the cross of Christ. The world about them has nothing but mockery and blasphemy for the cross and the Crucified, but the faithful place their trust in life and death in the Man of Sorrows.

The death of Jesus: V. 28. **After this, Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the scripture might be fulfilled, saith, I thirst.** V. 29. **Now there was set a vessel full of vinegar; and they filled a sponge with vinegar, and put it upon hyssop, and put it to His mouth.** V. 30. **When Jesus, therefore, had received the vinegar, He said, It is finished; and He bowed His head, and gave up the ghost.** Again and again the evangelists bring out this fact that the suffering and death of Jesus took place in accordance with the will and counsel of God and with the sayings of the prophets, through whom the Messiah spoke. It was about three o'clock in the afternoon when the most acute and piercing suffering of Jesus, when, during the darkness that covered the land, He had drunk the cup of the wrath of God over the sins of the world to the very dregs, was over. He had remained victor in the terrible battle; He had conquered all the enemies of mankind; He had accomplished all things, brought them to a successful close; He had gained the salvation of mankind. Here is a word of wonderful comfort for all believers, especially in the hours when the attacks of doubt are directed against the assurance of salvation. The redemption of mankind is complete; nothing remains to be done but to accept this fact and to place unwavering trust in the Savior. But there was still a word of Old Testament prophecy which had not yet found its fulfilment, and therefore Jesus, whose thirst had been intensified by the agony of soul which He had just endured, cried out: I thirst. Cp. Ps. 69, 21. And just as He had foretold through the mouth of His Old Testament servant, it happened. There was a vessel there containing vinegar, of which they had offered Him a sip when they crucified Him, but in a form intended to act as a mild anesthetic. One of the soldiers now took a sponge, dipped it into the vinegar, attached it to a reed of hyssop, and held it up to the mouth of the Savior, thus relieving, at least in a small measure, the burning thirst attending the crucifixion, although it was in itself a bit of cruelty to offer Him this drink. But the Holy One of God patiently endured all the indignities, all the cruelties that were heaped upon Him. And now, the great work having been accomplished and even the last passage of Old Testament Scripture having been fulfilled, Jesus Himself made the announcement of the redemption's completion by calling out: It is finished. All that the Messiah was to endure and suffer, everything that belongs to the work of salvation, was finished. Yea, the death of Christ itself was included in this statement, for He was now about to lay down His life in death, in His own power, of His own free will. He now bowed His head and gave up the spirit, delivered His soul into the hands of His heavenly Father. All this He did in His own power; for He did not die of exhaustion, as all the external circumstances of the story also indicate. Jesus died because He wanted to die. In the case of the ordinary human being, death is an unpleasant, disagreeable, terrible experience, from which man shrinks and flees. But Jesus wanted to die, He wanted to fulfil the word which He Himself had spoken, chap. 10, 16. 17. The factor of willingness in the death of Jesus gives to it its value, makes it a sacrifice well pleasing to God. Mark also: The Man that died on the cross is not a mere man, but the Son of God, God Himself. Jesus, disposing of His own life as He willed it, Himself is God. This fact erases the guilt of the world; the great worth of the life which was given on Calvary makes it more than equivalent in value and ransom to all the sin and guilt of all men since the beginning of time and till the everlasting day begins.

The Burial of Jesus. John 19, 31—42.

The piercing of the side: V. 31. **The Jews, therefore, because it was the preparation, that the bodies should not remain upon the cross on the Sabbath-day, (for that Sabbath-day was an high day,) besought Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away.** V. 32. **Then came the soldiers, and brake the legs of the first, and of the other which was crucified with Him.** V. 33. **But when they came to Jesus and saw that He was dead already, they brake not His legs;** v. 34. **but one of the soldiers with a spear pierced His side, and forthwith came there out blood and water.** V. 35. **And he that saw it bare record, and his record is true; and he knoweth that he saith true, that ye might believe.** V. 36. **For these things were done that the scripture should be fulfilled, A bone of Him shall not be broken.** V. 37. **And again another scripture saith, They shall look on Him whom they pierced.** The Jews, that is, their spiritual leaders, concerned, as usual, more about the keeping of the traditions of their elders, in which they had applied Deut. 21, 23, than about committing murder and other heinous crimes, now sent a delegation to Pilate with a request. It was Friday, the day of preparation, and the Sabbath which was now coming was unusually great, being the day on which the first-fruits of the field were waved before the Lord and offered as a sacrifice. The Jews, therefore, did not want the bodies of the crucified hanging on the cross on that day, for fear of polluting their great festival day. Accordingly, their request was that

Pilate should resort to a method sometimes employed for the speedy killing of the crucified, namely, by breaking the bones of their legs with a heavy bar or mallet. Here was evidence of the most despicable hypocrisy with a vengeance. Without compunction in condemning the just and innocent Christ, but when they fear a Levitical impurity existing largely in their own imagination, they guard against a possible contamination by providing for a forcible death and a speedy removal of the dead bodies. Pilate having given his consent, the idea broached by the Jews was carried into execution. The soldiers broke the legs first of one and then of the other malefactor that was crucified with Jesus. But coming to Jesus as the last one, they found that He was dead, that He had already expired. The carrying out of the customary breaking of the legs in His case would have been without purpose, and so they refrained from doing so. The explanation seems simple enough, and yet there was not the least shred of chance in the happening. The bones of Jesus were not broken because He is the true Lamb of God, the Passover Lamb, of whom all the lambs that were slaughtered on that festival of old were but types and figures, Ex. 12, 46; Num. 9, 12. As the angel of death in Egypt passed by or over all the houses that were marked with the blood of the lamb, so the blood of this Lamb has turned the wrath of God from us. All those that have the portals of their heart marked with the blood of Jesus will not be visited by the angel of eternal death. Jesus was apparently dead when the soldiers reached His cross. And yet they wanted to make assurance doubly sure. One of their number, therefore, either pricked His side, as the strictest literalness of the word seems to indicate, in order to determine whether He had merely swooned away, or actually inflicted a deep wound in His side, piercing the heart, and thus fatal if Jesus had still been alive. But when the soldier withdrew his lance, as John relates, both blood and water flowed from the wounded side of the Savior. This was a strange happening, that the blood of one that had been dead for some time should flow out as from the living body, and that water should come from the wound at the same time. But John insists upon it that no mistake was possible; he, as an eye-witness, was too near not to be certain of the fact just as he describes it here. Both facts should be impressed upon the minds of the believers: that Christ truly died, and that this strange phenomenon took place at the piercing of His side. As one commentator has it: The blood that flowed from the side of Jesus was to serve for the washing of the sins of the whole world. It is the blood of reconciliation, the blood of God, wherewith He has cleansed all men from their sins. "The blood which flows from the side of our Lord Jesus is the treasure of our redemption, the payment and atonement for our sins. For by His innocent suffering and death and through His holy, precious blood, shed on the cross, our dear Lord Jesus Christ has paid for all our guilt, eternal death, and damnation, in which we, because of our sins, are immersed. That same blood of Christ is our advocate with God, and without ceasing cries for us to God: Mercy, mercy; forgive, forgive; indulgence, indulgence; Father, Father! and thus earns for us God's grace, forgiveness of sins, righteousness, and salvation. . . . Therefore the blood and the water which flowed from the side of our dear Lord Jesus Christ on the cross is our highest comfort. For therein consists our soul's salvation: in the blood is our redemption and satisfaction for our sins; in the water there is our daily cleansing and purging from sins. This we should learn well and thank God, our dear Lord, for His boundless love and goodness, and our faithful Savior Jesus Christ for His suffering and death, with all our hearts." 97) Incidentally, as the evangelist points out, there is another prophecy which was in part fulfilled on Calvary, in the piercing of the side of Christ, Ps. 22, 16. 17; Zech. 12, 10; Rev. 1, 7. The unbelieving Jews saw Him whose side was pierced hanging on the cross, and the fact should have recalled to their minds this prophecy of the Psalms and its import. The day will come when they will see the same Man against whom they vented their spite coming back to judge the quick and the dead; then their wailing and pleading for mercy will come too late.

The burial of Jesus: V. 38. **And after this, Joseph of Arimathaea, being a disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews, besought Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus; and Pilate gave him leave. He came, therefore, and took the body of Jesus.** V. 39. **And there came also Nicodemus, which at the first came to Jesus by night, and brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about an hundred pound weight.** V. 40. **Then took they the body of Jesus, and wound it in linen clothes with the spices, as the manner of the Jews is to bury.** V. 41. **Now, in the place where He was crucified there was a garden, and in the garden a new sepulcher, wherein was never man yet laid.** V. 42. **There laid they Jesus, therefore, because of the Jews' preparation day; for the sepulcher was nigh at hand.** When, in the hour of trial, the apostles failed their Lord, other disciples, up till then almost unknown, boldly professed their allegiance to the hated Nazarene. One of these men was Joseph, a counselor, a member of the Sanhedrin, whose home was in Rama or Arimathaea, the city of Samuel, 1 Sam. 1, 1. 19. He had kept his convictions concerning Jesus secret for fear of the Jews. But now he comes forward boldly, goes to Pilate, and requests to be given the body of Jesus. Pilate, having made

97) Luther, 8, 965. 969.

the necessary inquiries as to the death of the Crucified, granted the permission. So Joseph set out for Calvary to take down the body of his Master. And here he was joined by Nicodemus, of whom the evangelist has spoken in two places, chap. 3, 1; 7, 50. This man had also come to the knowledge of the truth; he believed in Jesus as his Savior. He came to Calvary well prepared for the last work of love for the Master, bearing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, aromatic spices used for the embalming of the dead, a total of a hundred liters or Jewish pounds, almost seventy pounds avoirdupois. Being a rich man, he was willing to show his devotion for his Lord, the compound of spices which he brought being sufficient to anoint the whole body as well as to saturate the grave-cloths. Having taken the body down from the cross, these two men prepared it for burial, by wrapping it in the burial sheets with the aromatic spices, after the manner of the Jews in preparing bodies for entombment. At the place of crucifixion, adjacent to it or very near it, there was a garden, where Joseph had his own rock grave, which had never been used for a burial and therefore had not been desecrated by the smell of decaying flesh. The main reason for the hasty entombment in the near-by sepulcher was the nearness of the great festival day of the Jews. The day of preparation ended with sunset, after which manual labor of any kind was prohibited. Note: Jesus received, after all the shame and disgrace of His trial and death, at least an honorable burial: He was laid into the grave of a rich man and was buried after the manner of a rich man. All these factors point forward to His approaching glorification. There is nothing terrible about the sepulcher of Jesus; it rather appears as a couch for gentle sleep. Jesus Christ, the Savior of the world, by His burial has sanctified the graves of all His saints, made them places of calm repose, where they wait in peace for the great day of resurrection.

Summary. *Jesus, after further mockery, is condemned to death by Pilate, is crucified on Calvary, gives up His life into the hands of His heavenly Father, and is buried by Joseph and Nicodemus, who had been His secret disciples for some time.*

CHAPTER 20.

Easter Morning. John 20, 1—18.

Mary Magdalene at the grave: V. 1. **The first day of the week cometh Mary Magdalene early, when it was yet dark, unto the sepulcher, and seeth the stone taken away from the sepulcher.** V. 2. **Then she runneth and cometh to Simon Peter and to the other disciple, whom Jesus loved, and saith unto them, They have taken away the Lord out of the sepulcher, and we know not where they have laid Him.** "The first day of the week," according to Christian reckoning; for with Christians all days are Sabbaths and none especially holy, excepting inasmuch as they are sanctified and hallowed by the Word of God and prayer. This was on Sunday, the third day after Jesus had been laid into the grave. On this morning several women from the circle of the disciples started out early for the grave of the Lord. Of these the evangelist John mentions Mary Magdalene especially, the story of the others having been narrated by the earlier gospel-writers. It was so early that the shadows of dawn were still lying over the country, though the light was breaking. When Mary Magdalene, in the company of the other women, came within sight of the tomb of the Master and saw that the heavy stone which fitted into the groove before the opening, and served in a way to lock the entrance, had been taken away, she waited for nothing more. The other women stayed and investigated the matter more closely, but Mary ran back to the city as quickly as she could. Whether by design or by accident, she struck Simon Peter and John first of all. Hastily she poured into their ears what she had seen, as well as her deductions therefrom; for she seems to have been certain that the sepulcher had been violated by some one, perhaps even by the authorities, who had reasons of their own for removing the body of the hated Nazarene. Hastily she states her message: They have carried away the Lord out of the tomb, and we know not where they have placed Him. She was not alone in her anxious fears, the other women agreeing with her. We here see the result of following one's own conjectures and surmises instead of paying strict attention to the Word of the Lord. If all the disciples, men and women, had closely remembered the prophecies of the Lord concerning His Passion and resurrection, they would have saved themselves many a bitter heartache. Christians must learn ever better to search the Scriptures, to turn to the Word in all the various vicissitudes of life, instead of following their own ideas and feelings.

Peter and John at the grave: V. 3. **Peter therefore went forth, and that other disciple, and came to the sepulcher.** V. 4. **So they ran both together; and the other disciple did outrun Peter, and came first to the sepulcher.** V. 5. **And he, stooping down and looking in, saw the linen clothes lying; yet went he not in.** V. 6. **Then cometh Simon Peter, following him, and went into the sepulcher, and seeth the linen clothes lie,** v. 7. **and the napkin that was about His head, not lying with the**

linen clothes, but wrapped together in a place by itself. V. 8. Then went in also that other disciple, which came first to the sepulcher; and he saw and believed. V. 9. For as yet they knew not the scripture, that He must rise again from the dead. V. 10. Then the disciples went away again unto their own home. The message of Mary Magdalene stirred both Peter and John to quick action. They immediately made up their minds to find out the truth of this most astounding matter. At first the two disciples ran together, side by side. Soon, however, the younger and nimbler John outran Peter and arrived at the tomb first. But here he hesitated. He may have had some presentiment of the miracles which the disciples were soon to witness. He could not quite make up his mind to investigate more closely. He merely stooped down and peered into the semidarkness of the tomb. He could make out the linen grave-cloths with which the body had been wound, but nothing more; and he could not make up his mind to enter. But when impulsive Peter came along, there was not a moment's hesitation. He went into the tomb; he viewed closely the grave-cloths, assuring himself of their identity; he noted also the sudary, or napkin, which had been wrapped about the head of the Master. It struck him that this cloth was lying apart from the other linen wrappings, in a place by itself, and that it was folded or rolled together. All these significant discoveries he undoubtedly communicated to John, until the latter finally was induced also to enter and to see the evidence presented in the tomb with his own eyes. It was certainly surprising enough to find all the cloths laid aside with such apparent care, with no sign of haste, as would have been the case had the sepulcher been violated and the body stolen. What John saw drove him to one conclusion: Jesus Himself had laid aside these wrappings; He had risen; He had returned to life. And this conviction forced itself upon John, although he, with the other apostles, at that time did not have the proper understanding of the Scriptures concerning the resurrection of the Master, namely, that it was a necessary part of the scheme of redemption, that it must happen to complete the work for the salvation of mankind. And the same facts, as related by these faithful witnesses, without the slightest indication of having connived to cheat the world: the empty tomb, the careful order in the grave, the absence of any and every indication of robbery, should convince any reasonable critic of the resurrection of Jesus. That is the faith of the Christians; upon the miracle of Christ's resurrection they place their own hope of salvation. The grave had to give up its prey. The victory of the grave is turned into defeat; the sting of death is taken away. Ours is the victory through Jesus Christ, our Lord. For the time being, at least, John was satisfied in his own mind that his Master had returned to life. And the time was coming when the last remnant of spiritual darkness was to be removed from his mind. Meanwhile the two disciples went away more slowly and thoughtfully from the grave than they had come. They returned home or to their place of lodging in Jerusalem. Note: Reasonable proofs of the resurrection of Christ can never give the heart the firm faith which is necessary for salvation. Under circumstances it is a good thing to be able to stop the mouths of the gainsayers by showing them the foolishness of their position; but the most convincing arguments are the statements of Scriptures themselves.

Mary Magdalene and the two angels: **V. 11. But Mary stood without at the sepulcher, weeping; and as she wept, she stooped down, and looked into the sepulcher, v. 12. and seeth two angels in white, sitting, the one at the head and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain. V. 13. And they say unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? She saith unto them, Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid Him.** When Peter and John had run to the tomb in such great haste, Mary had followed more slowly, arriving in the garden only after Peter and John had again left. Her mind was still filled with her first conclusion, namely, that the removal of her Lord's body was due to grave-robbery. And she had given way to a fit of unrestrained weeping. She still remained outside the tomb in helpless and hopeless despair. Incidentally, however, she is prompted to look whether the body of the Lord is really gone from the sepulcher, or whether the whole matter is only a kind of bad dream. So she stoops forward to look at the place where the men had laid the Lord in her own presence, with her tears still flowing freely. The love which Mary Magdalene had for the Master is a fitting example for the believers of all times. "This Mary is a fine, beautiful type and an excellent example of all those that cling to Christ, that their hearts should burn in pure and true love toward Christ. For she forgets everything, both her feminine modesty and person, is not bothered by the fact that she sees the two angels before her, does not remember that Hannas and Caiaphas are filled with hostile wrath. In brief, she sees nothing, she hears nothing but Christ only. If she could only find the dead Christ, then she would be perfectly satisfied. And the evangelist for that reason has described it so diligently in order that we, who preach and hear it, may also, according to this example, gain desire, love, and eagerness toward Christ the Lord." 98) When Mary stooped forward to look into the grave, she saw two angels in white garments sitting there, the one at the head, the other at the feet, where the

98) Luther, 8, 985.

body of the Lord had been lying. They were sitting there with a purpose; they were ready to give information concerning the truth of the resurrection to all that sought it. They may have been the same angels that had been present at the earlier hour, or they may have been new messengers of the Lord, become visible for the occasion. It seems that there must have been almost a friendly rivalry in heaven for the privilege of being the guardians of the grave of the Lord, just as at the birth of Christ the multitude of the heavenly host came down to the fields of Bethlehem to sing their anthem of praise. Sympathetically the angels asked Mary: Woman, why weepest thou? Their purpose was to open her eyes that she might see and hear the truth. But Mary's grief is too deep to notice the presence of glorious comfort. She was surrounded with evidences of her Lord's resurrection which should have caused her to leap and shout with joy, and here she gives the angels the hopeless answer: Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have placed Him. The case of Mary is repeated in the experience of Christians the world over. If they are visited with any real or supposed trouble, they are immediately so engrossed with their grief that they fail to see the multitude of evidences all about them that Jesus lives, and that therefore nothing can really matter. To trust unfailingly in the resurrected Savior, that must be the aim and the steady endeavor of the believers in the Lord.

Jesus appears to Mary: V. 14. **And when she had thus said, she turned herself back, and saw Jesus standing, and knew not that it was Jesus.** V. 15. **Jesus saith unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? Whom seekest thou? She, supposing Him to be the gardener, saith unto Him, Sir, if Thou have borne Him hence, tell me where Thou hast laid Him, and I will take Him away.** V. 16. **Jesus saith unto her, Mary. She turned herself, and saith unto Him, Rabboni; which is to say, Master.** V. 17. **Jesus saith unto her, Touch Me not; for I am not yet ascended to My Father; but go to My brethren and say unto them, I ascend unto My Father and your Father, and to My God and your God.** V. 18. **Mary Magdalene came and told the disciples that she had seen the Lord, and that He had spoken these things unto her.** While Mary was still in the midst of her bitter complaint to the angels, she may have heard some noise behind her, a footstep or a rustling, which caused her to turn around quickly. She noticed that there was a man standing there, but somehow she did not associate this man with her Lord. It was not merely that her eyes were dim with tears, but that Jesus now appeared in a form from which all lowliness had vanished, and which was also glorified, spiritualized. As Jesus chose, He could make Himself visible and invisible, be present now in one place, now in another; He could either assume the old familiar aspect in which His disciples knew Him, or He could appear before them as a stranger whom they in no way associated with their former Master. So it was in this instance. Even His voice He had changed. His sympathetic question, therefore, couched in the same words as that of the angels, only causes a new outburst of resentment and grief. She took Jesus for the gardener, the man that certainly should know something about the disappearance of her Lord. If he was responsible for the removal of the body, he was to give her the necessary information at once, in order that she might go and carry Him away. The idea may have struck Mary that the gardener had seen fit to take the body to some other grave near by, because this tomb was to be used for another body. Note the love of Mary: Weak woman that she is, she will undertake single-handed to carry the body of her beloved Lord away. But Jesus felt that the time had now come for Him to reveal Himself. In the old familiar voice which all the disciples knew and loved, He spoke only that one word: Mary! The form of the speaker might have been unfamiliar, His body might have been glorified, but by that voice Mary would have known Him anywhere. From the depths of a heart transported with joy her shout broke forth: Rabboni; my Master! He was there, alive and well; and nothing else mattered. And she may have thought that the old, familiar intercourse would again be resumed, that she could touch Him, assure herself definitely as to His identity. But the time of intimate companionship between Master and pupils had now gone by. Jesus warns her not to touch Him; this was not His permanent return to visible fellowship with His disciples. He gives her the reason for this prohibition: Because I have not yet ascended to My Father. After His glorification had been fully accomplished, His disciples might enter into closer communion with Him than ever before, in the manner which He had explained to the apostles in the last discourses on the evening before His death. By His ascension, Jesus entered into the full and unlimited use of His divine majesty, and thus also of His omnipresence. And therefore He is now closer to His disciples than ever before. By faith all the believers have Jesus in their own hearts, a much more intimate, a much closer communion than ever that was which obtained between Christ and His disciples in the state of His humiliation.[99] It is a wonderfully beautiful message which Jesus incidentally entrusts to Mary, which she should commit to His brethren: I ascend to My Father and to your Father, to My God and to your God. There is a world of comfort in the word "brethren." "These words should fittingly be written with great and golden letters, not simply on paper nor

99) Luther, 8, 990.

into a book, but on our hearts, that they might live therein: Go, and tell My brethren. That surely should be a word to make a Christian joyful, and to awaken and stimulate love toward Christ. . . . If one would consider rightly how rich and comforting these words are, he would become intoxicated for joy and desire, as Mary Magdalene was intoxicated with devotion and love toward the Lord. Who of us would believe certainly and firmly in his heart that Christ is his Brother, he would come along with leaps and say: Who am I to be honored thus and to be, and be called, the son of God? For I surely am not worthy that such a great King and Lord of all creatures should call me His creature. But now He is not satisfied to call me His creature, but wants me to be and be called His brother. Should I, then, not be happy, since that Man calls me His brother who is the Lord over heaven and earth, over sin and death, over devil and hell, and all that may be named, not only in this world, but also in that to come?" 100) The words of Jesus are unmistakable: He gives to His believers the high and great honor, placing them absolutely on the same level with Himself. That is the glorious fruit and result of His work of redemption. Mary Magdalene, for her part, now believed. She was convinced that the resurrection of Jesus was the seal of the completed redemption. And she brought her message to the disciples. She stated, without doubt or hesitation, that she had seen the Lord, and that these were His words to them. A true believer will always testify of the faith in his heart. And if, in addition, such a person is commissioned and called by the Lord to make known the fact of the resurrection to others, the testimony should be made with all gladness and with the assurance that carries conviction.

Two Appearances to the Assembled Disciples. John 20, 19—31.

On the evening of Easter Day: V. 19. **Then the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you.** V. 20. **And when He had so said, He showed unto them His hands and His side. Then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord.** V. 21. **Then said Jesus to them again, Peace be unto you; as My Father hath sent Me, even so send I you.** V. 22. **And when He had said this, He breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost;** v. 23. **whosesoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whosesoever sins ye retain, they are retained.** Jesus gave His disciples sufficient evidence of His resurrection. On that very same day, in the evening, after He had appeared to various individuals and small groups, He showed Himself alive to ten of the apostles. They were assembled together in some house in Jerusalem and had carefully locked the doors, lest a sudden attack of the Jews make them, too, victims of their hatred. But for the glorified body of the resurrected Lord neither locked doors nor heavy walls were a hindrance. His being was no longer circumscribed by the confines of space and time. They had been alone but a moment ago, and now Jesus stood in their midst. And His was the greeting of the resurrected Savior: Peace to you! The purpose of His coming was now realized, the enmity between God and man had been removed. God was reconciled to His wayward and erring children. The peace of the risen Lord is the comfort and joy of all believers. "For that reason Christ became man, for that reason He died on the cross and arose on the third day, in order that, wherever our hearts, the devil, and the whole world cry about and against us because of our sins as though we were not at peace, that God did not want us, — that He might say to us: No, dear man, not thus, but peace with thee, God is not angry; on that account do not fear, for thy sins I have paid, death I have killed. In this be comforted, that I have done it; then all warfare must have an end and peace must come." 101) When the disciples were surprised at the risen Lord's coming and filled with superstitious fear, as though they were seeing a ghost, Jesus showed them His hands, where the marks of the nails were still plainly visible, and His side, where the soldier's lance-head had left a deep gash. This demonstration convinced the disciples; they were glad that they actually saw the Lord. It was the same body which had hung on the cross and thus earned and merited redemption for all men. His resurrection is not only a guarantee of our resurrection, but also of the fact that our vile bodies will be changed to conform to His glorified body, and that we shall be able to recognize our loved ones in heaven. Thus there is great, overwhelming joy for all Christians in the appearances of the risen Lord. Jesus now repeats His greeting as an introduction to a commission which He is about to give to them as His representatives. As the Father had sent Him into the world, so He now transferred the authority and the power of His calling to them. They were to carry the message of the peace of Easter into all the world. He sent them forth to preach the Gospel. For that is the summary and content of the Gospel, peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. And having named them thus as His messengers, as His ambassadors, the Lord formally inducts them into this office. He breathed on them, thus symbolizing the transmission of, and actually conveying to them, the Spirit who lived in Him, and whom

100) Luther, 8, 991. 992.

101) Luther, 13a, 1037.

He had the authority to bestow. The power of the Spirit was to be with them in the Word: If you remit the sins of any, they are remitted to them; if you retain those of any, they are retained. Thus they received the power to pronounce forgiveness of sins; thus was the Office of the Keys instituted. The forgiveness of sins which Jesus earned by His suffering and death should be imparted and given to men through the announcement of the Gospel, publicly and privately, to single persons and to large congregations. This is the absolution of sins. That is Christ's will and commission: His disciples should pronounce forgiveness, should take away sins, and then every one should know and believe that by such absolution his sins are actually forgiven and taken away. The Gospel is not only a report of the salvation earned by Jesus, but it is the application of this message, the imparting of the forgiveness of sins. Only he that will not accept this forgiveness, this mercy, this salvation, thereby excludes himself from the grace of God. If such a one is told this fact, his sins are thereby retained. This power and authority was not the sole prerogative of the apostles, nor is it now in the hands of any hierarchy, but it accompanies the Gospel, it is contained in the commission of Christ to all His disciples to preach the Gospel to all nations. To the believers in general, to the Christian congregation that proclaims the message of the Gospel, the keys are given. The pastors that exercise this authority do so in the name of the congregation.

The unbelief of Thomas and the second appearance to the Eleven: V. 24. **But Thomas, one of the Twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came.** V. 25. **The other disciples, therefore, said unto him, We have seen the Lord. But he said unto them, Except I shall see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into His side, I will not believe.** V. 26. **And after eight days again His disciples were within and Thomas with them; then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you.** V. 27. **Then saith He to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold My hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into My side; and be not faithless, but believing.** V. 28. **And Thomas answered and said unto Him, My Lord and my God.** V. 29. **Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen Me, thou hast believed; blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.** Thomas, called Didymus, the Twin, loved his Lord with true devotion, as his words on the occasion of the death of Lazarus had shown, John 11, 16. But he seems to have been of a rather sanguine temperament, with some leanings toward melancholy. He must be either in the highest realms of bliss or in a state of lowest dejection. For some reason he had not been present with the other disciples on Easter evening, and therefore had not seen the Lord. The other disciples were eager with their news: We have seen the Lord. They were convinced of His resurrection, they knew that their Master was living, they had received His commission. But Thomas shook his head in unbelief and voiced his doubt in most emphatic words. The proof which he demanded for the resurrection of the Lord was of a most inclusive and conclusive nature. He not only wanted to see the risen Master, he was not satisfied with merely looking at the impressions or prints in His hands where the nails had been driven through the flesh; he also wanted to back up the evidence of the one sense by that of another, he wanted to feel the wound, lest he be led astray by an illusion. And he wanted to place his hand into the gaping wound of His side where the lancehead of the soldier had entered. Those were the conditions under which he proposed to believe the fact of the resurrection, and they certainly show the extent and depth of his doubt. Jesus, of course, in His omniscience, was fully aware of this attitude of Thomas, and He arranged a second appearance before the apostles, apparently for the express purpose of convincing Thomas and making him a proper witness of the resurrection. It was eight days afterward, on the following Sunday evening, that the disciples were again assembled, Thomas in this case being in their midst. And Jesus repeated the methods of the previous occasion, stepping into the circle of the apostles while they were sitting behind locked doors, and giving them the greeting of peace. And now the Lord, turning directly to Thomas, complied with all the conditions as the doubting disciple had made them, inviting him to extend his finger and investigate both His hands, and to reach forth his hand and put it into His side. But Jesus adds, in the form of an impressive warning: Be not unbelieving, but believing. His faith, which was wavering badly and was having a hard battle with doubt, should not succumb altogether. The Lord was willing enough to have the test made if there were but chances of upholding a disciple in his trust in Him. Thomas, however, had no need of a test now that he saw his Master before him and heard His loving voice. His wavering faith returned to its full strength with one joyful strengthening by the word of the Lord, giving utterance to a wonderful confession concerning Jesus. In the tone of the firmest conviction Thomas exclaimed: My Lord and my God. His faith not only knows that his Lord and Master is alive, is risen from the dead, but he knows this Man to be the true God. By His resurrection from the dead, Jesus was declared to be the Son of God with power. His resurrection is a seal of the completed redemption and reconciliation of the world, by which also His deity is established beyond a doubt. It is a

miracle which only God can perform, to take His own life out of death. Jesus Christ is not only divine, but He is God Himself, true God with the Father and the Spirit. If this man, our Brother according to the flesh, were not true God, there would be no comfort for us in His death. But now there can be no doubt as to the complete and perfect redemption; for God in Christ, Christ as true God, was able to conquer all enemies, and to rise from the dead, and will live and reign through all eternity. But to gain the blessings of the resurrection of Jesus, it is necessary that every believer learn to say with Thomas: *My* Lord and *my* God. That is the nature of saving faith, that it clings to Jesus, the Savior, and appropriates all His redemption with a certain, joyful trust. Jesus now gently reproves Thomas for his foolish and dangerous doubt. Since he had seen his risen Lord, he believed and thus was satisfied and happy. But it is true at all times that the bliss and happiness of perfect faith does not rest upon the evidences of the senses nor upon feelings and reason, but upon the Word of the Gospel. The apostles, the witnesses of the resurrection of Christ, 1 John 1, 1—3, have recorded the facts concerning Jesus, His person and His work, and the salvation which we have in His name. Through this Word we have communion with our Lord; in the Word He comes to us and lives in us. Thus we have His full blessing. "He that wishes to know what we should believe, let him hear what Thomas believes, namely, that Jesus is the Son of God and the Lord of life, who will help us out of sins and death unto life and righteousness. Such trust and hope is the true faith, not only to know it, but also to accept it and to comfort one's self over against death and sin. Where there is such faith and trust, there is salvation, and our sins should not hinder us; for by faith they are forgiven." 102)

The purpose of the Gospel of John: **V. 30. And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of His disciples which are not written in this book; v. 31. but these are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that, believing, ye might have life through His name.** After recording the indisputable evidences for the greatest miracle of all and the reception of the miracle by the disciples, John here summarizes and states the purpose of his gospel. He expressly writes that he has not nearly exhausted the recital of Christ's miracles, but has given an account of only so many as are necessary to convince the readers of the gospel and work faith in Jesus the Christ, the Savior, the Son of God, in their hearts. For this is his thesis, as he distinctly asserts. His aim was to prove the deity of Christ and to work conviction in the hearts of men by such proof, in order that they might believe and by faith have the everlasting life which is in Christ and is given by Christ to them that believe in His name. That name, Jesus Christ, is not a mere appellation, a meaningless sound, but is itself glorious, beautiful Gospel which gives to the believers eternal life.

Summary. *After Mary Magdalene and then Peter and John have inspected the empty grave, Jesus appears to Mary, on the evening of Easter Day to the disciples without Thomas, and eight days later to them all, with the comforting evidence and message of the resurrection.*

102) Luther, 13a, 1041.

CHAPTER 21.

The Appearance of Christ at the Sea of Tiberias. John 21, 1—14.

The fishing expedition: **V. 1. After these things Jesus showed Himself again to the disciples at the Sea of Tiberias; and on this wise showed He Himself. V. 2. There were together Simon Peter, and Thomas, called Didymus, and Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, and the sons of Zebedee, and two other of His disciples. V. 3. Simon Peter saith unto them, I go a-fishing. They say unto him, We also go with thee. They went forth, and entered into a ship immediately; and that night they caught nothing.**103) Jesus had told His disciples that He would see them at a designated place in Galilee after His resurrection, Matt. 26, 32; 28, 7; Mark 16, 7. Some time, therefore, after the second appearance to the assembled disciples a week after Easter, the latter made the journey to the northern province, traveling by way of the road along the Sea of Galilee, and probably visiting their old homes. Thus it was that they found themselves, on a late afternoon, on the shores of the lake which some of them had so often traversed in their calling as fishermen. It was a party of seven that was together here: Simon Peter, Thomas Didymus, Nathanael of Cana, James and John, the sons of Zebedee, and two other disciples whose names the evangelist does not record. The interval between the resurrection of Jesus and the miracle of Pentecost must have been unusually trying for the disciples. They were without a leader, they had not yet received the extraordinary communication of the Spirit which would enable each one to strike out for himself. In this mood of un-

103) On the authenticity of the last chapter of John, see *Lehre und Wehre*, 1909, 337 ff.

certainty they were standing on the shore of the sea, when Peter suddenly exclaimed: I go off to fish. Probably the sight of the boats leaving for the night's fishing had awakened the old love for his former occupation. And the others, rightly considering his words an invitation to join him, responded with great alacrity that they would accompany him. The excursion promised some diversion and might yield an income. So they embarked in a boat and launched forth. But their efforts were not crowned with success. As on a former occasion, they worked all night and caught nothing. Note: In any calling, trade, occupation, or profession the blessing must be given by the Lord; without Him the most assiduous efforts and apparent success are without value.

A second miraculous draught: V. 4. **But when the morning was now come, Jesus stood on the shore; but the disciples knew not that it was Jesus.** V. 5. **Then Jesus saith unto them, Children, have ye any meat? They answered Him, No.** V. 6. **And He said unto them, Cast the net on the right side of the ship, and ye shall find. They cast therefore, and now they were not able to draw it for the multitude of fishes.** V. 7. **Therefore that disciple whom Jesus loved saith unto Peter, It is the Lord. Now when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he girt his fisher's coat unto him, (for he was naked,) and did cast himself into the sea.** V. 8. **And the other disciples came in a little ship; (for they were not far from the land, but as it were two hundred cubits,) dragging the net with fishes.** The dawn of the morning after a night of such toil may well have found the disciples discouraged, and they turned more closely inshore. And there was Jesus standing on the shore, although the men in the boat did not recognize Him. It was another revelation of His spiritual body, which had the faculty of becoming invisible and changing its characteristics. The old familiar form and appearance was often not there to guide the disciples after the resurrection, as in the case of the appearance to Mary Magdalene and to the Emmaus pilgrims. Jesus did not reveal His identity at once. He merely called to them, as any man might have addressed a company of fishermen: Lads, have you any fish? that is: Have you had any luck in your work? Did you catch any fish? The word used by the Lord indicates anything that was eaten in addition to the regular meal of bread, the German *Zukost*. Since, in those countries, this was almost invariably fish, the question is very simple in its meaning. Upon their answering in the negative, the Lord bids them cast forth their net on the right side of the boat, for there they would find fish. And the result was such an immense catch of fish that the combined efforts of the men did not succeed in drawing the net into the boat. The number and the consequent weight of the fish were too great for their strength. The first man among the disciples to draw the proper conclusion from this obvious miracle was John. He told Peter: It is the Lord. This explanation immediately appealed to Peter, and, with his usual impetuous ardor, he quickly threw about him his fisherman's coat, or blouse, and plunged into the sea to swim to the shore. As an old commentator has it: "John had the keener insight, Peter the greater ardor." Peter had very likely been rowing with probably only a loin-cloth on, and the small garment, or coat, could be girded on most quickly over his naked body. The other disciples came more slowly than Peter, in the little boat or skiff, with the net full of fishes in tow. This was done all the more easily, since they had been a matter of only two hundred cubits, about one hundred yards, from the shore. All the disciples present knew by this time that they had again witnessed a miracle, had, in fact, been instruments of the Lord in performing this miracle, and the narrative pictures them as filled with awe and reverence at this new manifestation of divine power on the part of Jesus.

The meal on the beach: V. 9. **As soon, then, as they were come to land, they saw a fire of coals there, and fish laid thereon and bread.** V. 10. **Jesus saith unto them, Bring of the fish which ye have now caught.** V. 11. **Simon Peter went up, and drew the net to land full of great fishes, an hundred and fifty and three; and for all there were so many, yet was not the net broken.** V. 12. **Jesus saith unto them, Come and dine. And none of the disciples durst ask Him, Who art Thou? knowing that it was the Lord.** V. 13. **Jesus then cometh and taketh bread, and giveth them, and fish likewise.** V. 14. **This is now the third time that Jesus showed Himself to His disciples after that He was risen from the dead.** While the disciples came to land, in one way or the other, the Lord had kindled a fire and provided both bread and fish for breakfast. Note the narration of details peculiar to an eye-witness. Note also that the providence of Jesus is well able to take care of all the needs of His disciples, whether they be small or great. Upon the order of Jesus that they should bring of the fish which they had caught and had now towed to the shore, Simon Peter went aboard the skiff, and, single-handed, drew the net up on the beach. His love for the Master and the excitement of the occasion gave him almost superhuman strength. Many a labor of love in the interest of Christ and the Church has seemed impossible from the standpoint of human reckoning, but has proved a comparatively easy matter when undertaken in the fear of the Lord and with the firm conviction that it was the Lord's will. Two items are emphasized by the evangelist at this point: the fact that the net contained a total of one hundred and fifty-three

fishes, not small ones, but large and heavy; and that the net, in spite of the great weight, did not tear. All these details come together to make a picture of Christ's almighty power which cannot be gainsaid by the enemies. This miracle teaches the believers of all times that the Lord can and will take care of their physical needs; He will provide their daily bread for them. Theirs is but to work in their calling with all faithfulness and not to give way to idleness on the one hand, and to foolish anxiety on the other. The Lord, having now provided the meal, invited the disciples to breakfast. And the disciples were glad to come, although with some restraint. Whereas before His Passion they had been on a friendly basis with their Master, a new dignity and aloofness forced their awed respect. They all knew that it was the Lord, and did not dare ask questions. Jesus now came forward and assumed the rôle of host, distributing both bread and fish to them. Almost every action of the Lord reminded the disciples of some incident in the Lord's ministry, and made them raise their hearts in thankful prayer for the blessing of His presence. Incidentally, this third appearance to a larger body of disciples reminded them of the great calling which they were now soon to enter upon. The Lord did not get out of touch with His messengers; He did not permit their thoughts to get away entirely from the real life-work which was awaiting them.

The Test of Peter's Love. John 21, 15—25.

The Lord's threefold question: V. 15. **So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou Me more than these? He saith unto Him, Yea, Lord; Thou knowest that I love Thee. He saith unto him, Feed My lambs.** V. 16. **He saith to him again the second time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou Me? He saith unto Him, Yea, Lord; Thou knowest that I love Thee. He saith unto him, Feed My sheep.** V. 17. **He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou Me? Peter was grieved because He said unto him the third time, Lovest thou Me? And he said unto Him, Lord, Thou knowest all things; Thou knowest that I love Thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed My sheep.** When the disciples had finished their breakfast as guests of the Master, Jesus showed that He had a special reason for appearing at this time. He addressed Himself to Peter, probably taking this disciple aside from the rest. The Lord had appeared to Peter alone on Easter Day, Luke 24, 34, and had undoubtedly at that time reinstated him in his position as His disciple. But here the Lord purposely speaks to Peter in the view of, if not in the presence of, six disciples that had been present on the evening before His death. In a most solemn and impressive manner Jesus asks Peter three times as to his love for Him. He puts the first question in such a way as to make a comparison between the love of Peter and that of the rest. Peter had professed and protested a more affectionate regard for Christ than the other disciples, Matt. 26, 33, but had learned, to his great sorrow, how foolish it is to trust in one's own strength. Three times had he denied his Lord after that saying. It was not the object of Christ to work repentance at this time, for Peter's grief had been deep and genuine, and he had been received into grace before this. Nevertheless, the lesson which the Lord administered was necessary, in order to keep Peter in the humility which is demanded above all of the servant of the Lord. The use of his old name, Simon, and the addition of the explanation, "son of Jonas," made the question all the more searching: Lovest thou Me? Was Peter now ready to love His Lord and Savior with all his heart, with all his soul, and with all his mind? The threefold answer of Peter is significant of the change that had taken place in him since that night of the denial. At that time it had been his own self, his own person, that had been brought into the foreground. But now the first person is relegated to the background, while Peter appeals to the knowledge of Christ. When the question of the Lord came for the third time, Peter was deeply grieved. He felt the justness of the Lord's position; he knew that he had given cause for doubt. And the very tenderness of the reproof made the grief of Peter all the more poignant and his protestations of love all the more fervid. He finally appeals to the Lord's omniscience. He that knows all things, that searches hearts and minds, could and would read the feeling of his heart aright and know that the love he bore his Savior was genuine, based upon the faith in the redemption of the God-man. This is a mark of true faith, when Christians not only confess before men that they love their Lord, but when they challenge the omniscient God Himself to search their hearts in this respect. The love of the Christians may often be weak and in strong need of support, but it must be genuine just the same. The Lord recognized and rewarded the sincerity of Peter's love and faith. Three times He gives him the significant command to feed, to be a pastor to, His sheep, His lambs. The sheep of Jesus, as He Himself explains John 10, are those whom the Father has given Him, the believers. And the lambs are the little ones in the kingdom of God, especially the children, Matt. 18; Mark 10. Thus Peter received a special call and was reinstated in his office and ministry. Peter was to be one of those that have charge of the flock of Christ, that perform the work of pastors and shepherds. For to feed the sheep, as Luther says, is nothing but proclaiming to them the Word of God, that is, true faith. The commission of the Lord is in power even to-day. All true preachers of the Gospel, in this respect, have

the same ministry as the apostles. The prime requisite for a person that has charge of a flock of Jesus is genuine and fervid love toward Christ, the great Shepherd of all. This love will then find its expression in true pastoral work, both public and private, the application of the wonderful message of salvation wherever this message can be proclaimed.

A prophecy concerning Peter: V. 18. **Verily, verily, I say unto thee, When thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest; but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not.** V. 19. **This spake He, signifying by what death he should glorify God. And when He had spoken this, He saith unto Him, Follow Me.** The interview with Peter affected also the Lord very deeply, because His love for His disciples was most cordial. Referring probably to the action of Peter in girding his coat about him when the Lord stood on the beach, Jesus tells him that these conditions are still obtaining. He still has his freedom to come and go as he wished. But the time is coming, in his old age, when Peter will be obliged to extend his hands, to be bound and manacled and to be led where he has no natural inclination to go. It was a prophecy of Peter's martyrdom. According to tradition which seems correct, Peter was put to death under the emperor Nero, by crucifixion, thus giving glory and honor and praise to God, even in his death. Only he must follow Christ, his Lord and Savior, at all times, whithersoever he was led. Note: The steadfast believer, sealing his faith with his life, gives glory to, and causes glory to come upon, the name of God and Jesus. Suffering for the sake of Christ belongs to the experiences of the average Christian, and especially of the servants of the Word.

The reference to John: V. 20. **Then Peter, turning about, seeth the disciple whom Jesus loved following; which also leaned on His breast at supper and said, Lord, which is he that betrayeth Thee?** V. 21. **Peter, seeing him, saith to Jesus, Lord, and what shall this man do?** V. 22. **Jesus saith unto him, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? Follow thou Me.** V. 23. **Then went this saying abroad among the brethren that that disciple should not die; yet Jesus said not unto him, He shall not die; but, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?** Peter was not yet altogether healed of his impetuousness. As he was walking along with Jesus, he could not refrain from turning back, and thus noticed that John, who here describes himself very exactly, was also coming their way. Peter at once asked: Lord, but this man, what of him? The Lord rebuked this lack of undivided attention on the part of Peter, telling him that it was entirely a matter for Him to decide whether John should remain until He would return. As soon as a person spends his time in musing upon what other people will do, he neglects some opportunities for service. The great Shepherd, Jesus Christ, has charge of His Church and will manage its affairs in such a way as to have them all redound to the salvation of them that are His and to the glory of God. Any interference with His government is foolish and sinful. Whether Jesus referred to His coming at the end of the world or to that coming which began in the judgment of Jerusalem, Matt. 16, 28, is immaterial. But the saying of Jesus was understood falsely. Some of the disciples believed that John would never die. This notion, however, he himself corrects by emphasizing the words: If I will that he tarry. All things are in the power, under the government of Jesus, the Lord and King of the Kingdom of Grace. A simple trust in the wisdom of His guidance should always characterize the attitude of all believers. We must be sure that the risen Christ has the fortunes of those that are His in His hand and will always guide them in the way which is to their value and benefit.

Conclusion: V. 24. **This is the disciple which testifieth of these things and wrote these things; and we know that his testimony is true.** V. 25. **And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written. Amen.** Here John, in a final note, defends the trustworthiness of the record which he has offered in his gospel. He has not written on the basis of questionable sources, but he knows that the witness which he hereby bears is true. Incidentally he affirms that if all the sayings and all the miracles and signs of Jesus had been recorded and described, it would be such a great mass, as one might say, that the world could not contain all the books, could not comprehend and grasp the wonders thus offered. But what John has recorded is fully sufficient for his purpose and that of the Spirit that spoke through him, namely, to teach the deity and the redemption of Jesus Christ, the Savior of the world, that all that believe on Him might not perish, but have everlasting life.

Summary. *Jesus appears to seven disciples at the Sea of Galilee, gives them another miraculous draught of fishes, and, in a searching interview, reinstates Peter into his discipleship.*

A TABELLARY HARMONY OF THE GOSPEL-STORY.

The prolog of John's gospel. John 1, 1—18.

Preface of Luke's gospel. Luke 1, 1—4.

Birth of John the Baptist promised. Luke 1, 5—25.

The Annunciation to Mary. Luke 1, 26—38.

The Annunciation to Joseph. Matt. 1, 18—25.

Mary's visit to Elizabeth. Luke 1, 39—56.

Birth of John the Baptist. Luke 1, 57—80.

Birth of Jesus the Christ. Matt. 1, 18—25; Luke 2, 1—14.

The adoration of the shepherds. Luke 2, 15—20.

The circumcision and presentation of Christ. Luke 2, 21—39.

Simeon and Anna. Luke 2, 25—40.

The wise men from the East. Matt. 2, 1—12.

The flight into Egypt and the return to Nazareth. Matt. 2, 13—23.

Childhood at Nazareth. Matt. 2, 23; Luke 2, 39. 40.

The twelve-year-old Christ-child in the Temple. Luke 2, 41—52.

The ministry of John the Baptist. Matt. 3, 1—12; Mark 1, 1—8; Luke 3, 1—18.

The baptism of Jesus. Matt. 3, 13—17; Mark 1, 9—11; Luke 3, 21. 22.

The temptation in the wilderness. Matt. 4, 1—11; Mark 1, 12. 13; Luke 4, 1—13.

John's testimony before the priests and Levites. John 1, 19—34.

The first disciples of Jesus. John 1, 35—51.

The marriage at Cana. John 2, 1—11.

The first cleansing of the Temple. John 2, 12—25.

The discourse with Nicodemus. John 3, 1—21.

John the Baptist's last testimony of Christ. John 3, 22—36.

The departure from Judea and the woman of Samaria. Matt. 4, 12; Mark 1, 14; John 4, 1—26.

The Gospel in Sychar. John 4, 27—42.

Imprisonment of John the Baptist and beginning of Christ's Galilean ministry. Matt. 14, 3—5; 4, 12—17; Mark 6, 17. 18; Luke 3, 19. 20; John 4, 43—45.

The healing of the nobleman's son. John 4, 46—54.

First rejection at Nazareth. Luke 4, 16—30.

Healing of the sick man of Bethesda. John 5, 1—18.

Testimony of Christ concerning Himself. John 5, 19—47.

Removal to Capernaum. Matt. 4, 13—16; Luke 4, 31a.

The call of the four. Matt. 4, 18—22; Mark 1, 16—20; Luke 5, 1—11.

A day of miracles in Capernaum. Matt. 8, 14—17; Mark 1, 21—34; Luke 4, 31—41.

A preaching tour in Galilee. Matt. 4, 23—25; 8, 1—4; Mark 1, 35—45; Luke 4, 42—44; 5, 12—16.

The miraculous draught of fishes. Luke 5, 1—11.

The call of Matthew. Matt. 9, 9—13; Mark 2, 13—17; Luke 5, 27—32.

The question about fasting. Matt. 9, 14—17; Mark 2, 18—22; Luke 5, 33—39.

The disciples plucking grain. Matt. 12, 1—8; Mark 2, 23—28; Luke 6, 1—5.

The man with the withered hand. Matt. 12, 9—14; Mark 3, 1—6; Luke 6, 6—11.

The wide-spread fame of Jesus. Matt. 4, 23—25; 12, 15—21; Mark 3, 7—12; Luke 6, 17—19.

The choosing of the Twelve. Matt. 10, 2—4; Mark 3, 13—19a; Luke 6, 12—19.

The Sermon on the Mount. Matt. 5, 1—8, 1; Luke 6, 20—49.

The healing of a leper. Matt. 8, 1—4; Mark 1, 40—45; Luke 5, 12—16.

The centurion's servant. Matt. 8, 5—13; Luke 7, 1—10.

The raising of the widow s son at Nain. Luke 7, 11—17.

John the Baptist's last message. Matt. 11, 2—19; Luke 7, 18—35.

Anointing of Jesus in the house of Simon the Pharisee. Luke 7, 36—50.

Christ's companions on His second preaching tour. Luke 8, 1—3.

Warnings to the scribes and Pharisees. Matt. 12, 22—45; Mark 3, 19b—30; Luke 11, 14—36.

The true kindred of Jesus. Matt. 12, 46—50; Mark 3, 31—35; Luke 8, 19—21.

The parables by the sea. Matt. 13, 1—53; Mark 4, 1—34; Luke 8, 4—18.

The stilling of the tempest. Matt. 8, 18. 23—27; Mark 4, 35—41; Luke 8, 22—25.

The Gadarene demoniacs. Matt. 8, 28—34; Mark 5, 1—20; Luke 8, 26—39.

The raising of Jairus's daughter. Matt. 9, 1. 18—26; Mark 5, 21—43; Luke 8, 40—56.

The two blind men and the dumb demoniac. Matt. 9, 27—34.

The third preaching tour continued. Matt. 9, 35; Mark 6, 6b.

The mission of the Twelve. Matt. 9, 36—11, 1; Mark 6, 7—13; Luke 9, 1—6.

Death of John the Baptist. Matt. 14, 1—12; Mark 6, 14—29; Luke 9, 7—9.

The feeding of the five thousand. John 6, 1—13; Matt. 14, 13—23; Mark 6, 30—46; Luke 9, 10—17.

Jesus walking on the water. Matt. 14, 24—36; Mark 6, 45—56; John 6, 14—21.

Discourse on the Bread of Life. John 6, 22—71.

Discourses on commandments of men. Matt. 15, 1—20; Mark 7, 1—23.

The Syrophenician woman. Matt. 15, 21—28; Mark 7, 24—30.

Return through Decapolis. Matt. 15, 29—31; Mark 7, 31—37.

The feeding of the four thousand. Matt. 15, 29—39; Mark 8, 1—9.

The demand for a sign from heaven. Matt. 15, 39—16, 12; Mark 8, 10—21; Luke 12, 54—57.

The blind man near Bethsaida. Mark 8, 22—26.

Peter's confession. Matt. 16, 13—20; Mark 8, 27—30; Luke 9, 18—21.

Christ foretells His death and resurrection. Matt. 16, 21—28; Mark 8, 31—9, 1; Luke 9, 22—27.

The transfiguration. Matt. 17, 1—13; Mark 9, 2—13; Luke 9, 28—36.

The demoniac boy. Matt. 17, 14—20; Mark 9, 14—32; Luke 9, 37—43a.

Discourse on humility and forgiveness. Matt. 18; Mark 9, 33—50; Luke 9, 46—50.

Jesus at the Feast of Tabernacles. John 7, 1—52.

The woman taken in adultery. John 7, 53 to 8, 11.

Jesus the Light of the World. John 8, 12—30.

Discourse on spiritual freedom. John 8, 31—59.

The final departure from Galilee. Matt. 19, 1. 2; Matt. 8, 19—22; Mark 10, 1; Luke 9, 51—62.

The mission of the seventy. Matt. 11, 20—30; Luke 10, 1—24.

The good Samaritan. Luke 10, 25—37.

The visit to Mary and Martha. Luke 10, 38—42.

Healing of the man born blind. John 9.

The Good Shepherd. John 10, 1—21.

Christ at the Feast of Dedication. John 10, 22—42.

Discourse on prayer. Luke 11, 1—13.

Woes against the Pharisees. Luke 11, 37—54.

Warning against the spirit of Pharisaism. Luke 12.

The Galileans slain by Pilate. Luke 13, 1—9.

The woman healed on a Sabbath. Luke 13, 10—21.

The question whether few are saved. Luke 13, 22—35.

Discourse at a chief Pharisee's table. Luke 14, 1—24.

On counting the cost. Luke 14, 25—35.

Three parables of grace. Luke 15.

Two parables of warning. Luke 16.

Concerning forgiveness and faith. Luke 17, 1—10.

The raising of Lazarus. John 11, 1—46.

The withdrawal to Ephraim. John 11, 47—54.

The ten lepers. Luke 17, 11—19.

The coming of the kingdom. Luke 17, 20 to 18, 8.

The Pharisee and the publican. Luke 18, 9—14.

Concerning divorce. Matt. 19, 1—15; Mark 10, 2—12; Luke 18, 15—17.

Christ and the rich young ruler. Matt. 19, 16—30; Mark 10, 17—31; Luke 18, 18—30.

The laborers in the vineyard. Matt. 20, 1—16.

Christ foretells His crucifixion. Matt. 20, 17—19; Mark 10, 32—34; Luke 18, 31—34.

Ambition of James and John. Matt. 20, 20—28; Mark 10, 35—45.

The blind men near Jericho. Matt. 20, 29—34; Mark 10, 46—52; Luke 18, 35—43.

Visit to Zacchaeus. Luke 19, 1—10.

Parable of the pounds. Luke 19, 11—28.

Anointing of Jesus by Mary of Bethany. Matt. 26, 6—13; Mark 14, 3—9; John 11, 55 to 12, 11.

The triumphal entry into Jerusalem. Matt. 21, 1—11; Mark 11, 1—11; Luke 19, 29—44; John 12, 12—19.

The cursing of the fig-tree. Matt. 21, 18. 19; Mark 11, 12—14.

Second cleansing of the Temple. Matt. 21, 12—17; Mark 11, 15—19; Luke 19, 45—48.

The fig-tree withered away. Matt. 21, 20—22; Mark 11, 20—25.

Christ's authority challenged. Matt. 21, 23—27; Mark 11, 27—33; Luke 20, 1—8.

Three parables of warning. Matt. 21, 28 to 22, 14; Mark 12, 1—12; Luke 20, 9—19.

Three questions by the Jewish rulers. Matt. 25, 15—40; Mark 12, 13—34; Luke 20, 20—40.

Christ's unanswerable question. Matt. 22, 41—46; Mark 12, 35—37; Luke 20, 41—44.

The discourse against the scribes and Pharisees. Matt. 23; Mark 12, 38—40; Luke 20, 45—47.

The widow's two mites. Mark 12, 41—44; Luke 21, 1—4.

Testimony of Jesus concerning His glorification. John 12, 20—50.

Concerning the destruction of Jerusalem and the end of the world. Matt. 24; Mark 13; Luke 21.

The ten virgins. Matt. 25, 1—13.

Of the Last Judgment. Matt. 25, 31—46.

The conspiracy against Jesus. Matt. 26, 1—5. 14—16; Mark 14, 1. 2. 10. 11; Luke 22, 1—6.

Jesus washing the disciples' feet. John 13, 1—20.

The Passover meal and the institution of the Lord's Supper. Matt. 26, 17—36; Mark 14, 12—26; Luke 22, 7—30; John 13, 1—30.

Christ's farewell discourses. Matt. 26, 31—35; Mark 14, 27—31; Luke 22, 31—38; John 13, 31—16, 33.

The intercessory prayer. John 17.

The agony in Gethsemane. Matt. 26, 30—46; Mark 14, 26—42; Luke 22, 39—46; John 18, 1.

The betrayal and arrest. Matt. 26, 47—56; Mark 14, 43—52; Luke 22, 47—53; John 18, 1—12.

The trial before the Jewish authorities and the denial of Peter. Matt. 26, 57—27, 10; Mark 14, 53—72; Luke 22, 54—71; John 18, 12—27.

The trial before Pilate. Matt. 27, 11—31; Mark 15, 1—20; Luke 22, 1—25; John 18, 28 to 19, 16a.

The crucifixion and death of Jesus. Matt. 27, 32—56; Mark 15, 21—41; Luke 23, 26—49; John 19, 16b—37.

The burial of Jesus. Matt. 27, 57—61; Mark 15, 42—47; Luke 23, 50—56a; John 19, 38—42.

The watch at the sepulcher. Matt. 27, 62—66.

Easter morning. Matt. 28, 1—15; Mark 16, 1—11; Luke 23, 56b—24, 12; John 20, 1—18.

The report of the watch. Matt. 28, 11—15.

The walk to Emmaus. Mark 16, 12. 13; Luke 24, 13—35.

The appearance to the disciples in Jerusalem. Mark 16, 14; Luke 24, 36—43; John 20, 19—31.

The appearance to seven disciples by the Sea of Galilee. John 21.

The appearance to the Eleven on a mountain in Galilee. Matt. 28, 16—20; Mark 16, 15—18.

Christ's final appearance and His ascension from Mount Olivet. Mark 16, 19. 20; Luke 24, 44—53.

The conclusion of John's gospel. John 20, 30. 31; 21, 25.[104]

---

104) On the entire harmony, cp. Stoeckhardt, *Biblische Geschichte des Neuen Testaments;* Robinson, *A Harmony of the Four Gospels in Greek;* Burton-Stevens, *A Harmony of the Four Gospels;* and on the resurrection story, *Ber. d. Synodalkonf.*, 1902.

THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES.

INTRODUCTION.

The author of the Acts of the Apostles, by the unanimous consent of the early Church, is Luke, the "beloved physician," the friend, companion, and coworker of St. Paul. The book, by its own testimony, is a sequel to the Gospel of St. Luke. Cp. chap. 1, 1 with Luke 1, 1—4. To all those that doubt the authorship of Luke, after comparing this book with the third gospel and noting the similarity in style, language, and vocabulary, it must be said, as one commentator has it: "The question of authorship lies between Luke and some other writer; and the adverse testimony, to be conclusive, should name that other writer." 1) Luke had the best opportunity to get his information from the most authentic sources, from the apostles, especially from Paul himself, and by his own personal observation, as the so-called "we" passages show. If one takes into consideration that the Holy Spirit, in using the holy writers as His tools for the penning of the divine truths, made use of their natural gifts and acquired abilities, the "Pauline character" of the book will stand out very prominently. The Book of Acts, like the Gospel of St. Luke, is inscribed to Theophilus, very probably a Roman convert belonging to the wealthier and more influential class. It is thus addressed principally to the Gentile Christians of Italy and elsewhere, by whom the easy style and fluent Greek of the author could readily be understood.

The aim or object of St. Luke in writing the Book of Acts appears in every chapter and almost on every page. He wanted to relate, in the first place, in what manner the gift of the Holy Ghost was given on the day of Pentecost, and that the subsequent work of the apostles was due entirely to His agency and ministry. So prominent is this feature, the Holy Ghost and His work being mentioned about seventy times, that one teacher of the Church has called the book the Gospel of the Holy Spirit. Closely connected with this feature is the fact that all the happenings in the history of the early Church are based upon, and made to appear as following out of, the resurrection of Jesus Christ. For this reason another teacher of the ancient Church called the book the Demonstration of the Resurrection. But, in the second place, Luke wanted to give an account of the spread of Christianity, not only among the Jews, but also among the Gentiles, by the missionary efforts of the apostles. "The dominant note of the book is the missionary cause." The Book of Acts intends to supplement the history of Jesus, as found in the Gospel of Luke, with a history of the apostles, and to give a graphic account of the victorious progress of the Gospel of Jesus from Jerusalem, the capital of Jewry, to Rome, the capital of the world. But there is also a third purpose evident in the Book of Acts. "This book you should read and regard not merely as St. Luke's record of the personal doings or history of the apostles, but this is the point you should rather note, namely, that with this book St. Luke teaches all Christendom to the end of the world the true chief article of Christian doctrine, which tells us that we must all be justified alone by faith in Jesus Christ, without the Law or our own works." 2) Hence the frequent use of the word "grace" and the continual reference to the glad tidings of the mercy of God in Christ Jesus.

Concerning the time when the Book of Acts was written, it is probable that it was written soon after the gospel, before the destruction of Jerusalem, but not long before the year 70 A. D. Its last verses indicate that it must have been written before the death of St. Paul, which occurred in 67 or early in 68. Taking everything together, the conclusion seems well founded to assume the year 65 as the date of composition and Rome as the place.

The Book of Acts is readily divided into two chief parts. In the first division Luke speaks of the general history of the Christian Church up to the death of Herod (chap. 1, 1—12, 25). This part may again be subdivided, since the author relates first of all the early history of the congregation at Jerusalem (1, 1—8, 4) and then the spread of the Church through Judea, Samaria, and the surrounding country (8, 5 to 12, 25). The second principal division of the book brings an account of the life and labors of the Apostle Paul. We have there, in the first place, a history of his preaching tours among the Gentiles to his visit at Jerusalem (13, 1 to 21, 16). And the end of the book gives the history of his five years' imprisonment.

"In the Book of Acts we see how the Church of Christ was formed and settled. The apostles simply proclaim the truth of God relative to the Passion, death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ; and God accompanies their testimony with the demonstration of His Spirit. What was the consequence? Thousands acknowledge the truth, embrace Christianity, and openly profess it at the most imminent risk of their lives. The change is not a change of merely one religious sentiment or mode of worship for another; but a change of tempers, passions, prospects, and moral conduct. All before was earthly, or animal, or devilish, or all these together; but now all is holy, spiritual, and

1) McGarvey, *New Commentary on Acts*, X.

2) Luther, 14, 92.

divine: the heavenly influence becomes extended, and nations are born unto God. And how was all this brought about? Not by might nor power; not by the sword, nor by secular authority; not through worldly motives and prospects; not by pious frauds or cunning craftiness; not by the force of persuasive eloquence: in a word, by nothing but the sole influence of Truth itself, attested to the heart by the power of the Holy Ghost." 3)

3) Clarke, *Commentary*, 5, 680.

CHAPTER 1.

The Ascension of Jesus. Acts 1, 1—11.

The last commission of Jesus: V. 1. **The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach,** v. 2. **until the day in which He was taken up, after that He through the Holy Ghost had given commandments unto the apostles whom He had chosen;** v. 3. **to whom also He showed Himself alive after His Passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God;** v. 4. **and, being assembled together with them, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith He, ye have heard of Me.** V. 5. **For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence.** "The former treatise," the first discourse, Luke had made, namely, in his gospel, to which he here evidently refers. The present history is a sequel to the gospel narrative; as the first writing had given an account of the ministry of Jesus, so the present book is to give an account of the labors of His ministers. This book, like the gospel, is addressed and dedicated to Theophilus, who may well have been a citizen of Rome holding a high official position, probably of equestrian rank, and a resident of the imperial city. In the gospel Luke had spoken of all; he had given a complete account of the labors of Jesus. The phrase "began to do and teach" is an idiomatic expression, as much as "both did and taught" in English. But there is here also a hint of the fact that Jesus began the work of the Gospel and committed its continuance to His disciples. The teaching of Jesus continued, in a way, even after His resurrection, although He then no longer spoke before the general public, but only to the believers. In those days, up to the day of His ascension, — and especially on this day, — He commissioned the apostles, He laid a certain obligation upon them. This commission, according to the intimate union obtaining in the Godhead, He did not give in an independent way, but through the same divine Spirit whom they received in extraordinary measure shortly after His ascension. All the communications of Jesus to His disciples are transmitted through the agency of the Spirit, whom He breathed upon them on Easter evening, John 20, 22. Note the distinction: Jesus had chosen the disciples out of the unbelieving world, and He had chosen the apostles from the ranks of the believers. To the latter the special apostolic commission was entrusted. Jesus Himself, at this time, was taken up, He was lifted up on high, He experienced His ascension as an act of the Father. But in the interval between His resurrection and ascension, Jesus had taken a number of opportunities to show Himself as their living Savior to His disciples. They had seen Him suffer; they had received the evidence of His death. Therefore He gave them, not only one, but many indubitable proofs of His resurrection from the dead. During a period of forty days He was seen by them on various occasions. And every new appearance was another link in the chain of convincing, certain evidence that He was living. He appeared to Mary Magdalene, John 20, 14—18; to the women returning from the grave, Matt. 28, 9. 10; to the Emmaus disciples, Luke 24, 15; to Simon Peter, Luke 24, 34; to ten of the apostles, other disciples also being present, Luke 24, 36; John 20, 19; to the eleven disciples a week later, John 20, 26; to seven of the apostles in Galilee, John 21, 4; to James and 500 brethren at one time, 1 Cor. 15, 6. 7; to the assembly of the disciples on Ascension Day, Luke 24, 50. Note: There is no discrepancy between Luke 24, 43—51 and the present passage, for in the former account Luke has contracted the interviews of the two appearances, while in this narrative he observes the distinction. At every appearance of the risen Christ His conversation and charge to His disciples concerned matters of the kingdom of God, He committed to them the charge of the truths and commands. In word and in deed the apostles and all disciples of the Lord are to proclaim that Kingdom. The one great message of the Church for all times shall be the acceptance of Jesus the Redeemer by faith, by which act the believer becomes a member of the kingdom of God.

Having thus summarized the events of the forty days intervening between the resurrection and the ascension, Luke now proceeds to give the gist of the conversation which took place on the last day of the visible Christ on earth. On this day Christ had assembled His disciples for the last time, not only the apostles, but all the believers, a crowded gathering, according to the Greek word. It was at this time that Jesus charged the assembled congregation of believers,

in an emphatic command, not to journey away from Jerusalem. They were to stay there and wait for the promise of the Father, the promise of the Holy Spirit which He had made to them on the evening before His death, John 14, 26; 15, 26. 27; 16, 12. 13. This promise they had heard, and this He calls to their remembrance. And He reminds them of another fact. John's baptism had been with water only, it had pointed forward to another, greater baptism of which John spoke, of a baptism with the Holy Spirit and with fire, Luke 3, 16. The extraordinary communication of the gifts of the Holy Spirit was to take place, as Jesus promises, not many days hence, after not many days. The prophecy of Joel 3, 18 was about to be fulfilled. Notice that Jesus both kindles in the hearts of the disciples a joyful longing and desire for the wonderful gift which is now so near, and exercises the faith of the apostles in His Word.

The final promise of the Holy Spirit: V. 6. **When they, therefore, were come together, they asked of Him, saying, Lord, wilt Thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?** V. 7. **And He said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons which the Father hath put in His own power.** V. 8. **But ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you; and ye shall be witnesses unto Me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.** When Jesus referred to the nearness of the great revelation of the Spirit's gifts, the disciples, whose hopes of some form of temporal kingdom under the leadership of Christ had been revived since His resurrection, thought that He was referring to this blissful consummation of their hopes. Those that had come together therefore, most likely in Jerusalem, put the question to the Lord: At this time wilt Thou restore the kingdom unto Israel? Their minds had returned entirely to the earthly, carnal understanding. They understood the prophecies of old as well as the promises of the Lord of the restoration of the kingdom to Israel, to be accomplished by the utter annihilation of the enemies of God and the complete victory for the Jews. Their foolish thoughts were not effectually dispelled until the Spirit of Pentecost was shed forth upon them. Although the question of the disciples had been put in all sincerity and sobriety, it argued for a remarkable lack of proper understanding after all the patient teaching of Jesus. His answer, therefore, in a way is a reproof. For He refers them to the real Messianic kingdom, to the future Kingdom of Glory, which will see the full revelation of Christ's majesty before the eyes of all men, very comforting to those that are to partake of this bliss with their Redeemer. Jesus here guards the royal prerogative, the exclusive rights of the Father. It is not the business of the disciples to know the times and the seasons, critical and otherwise, which are controlled by the exclusive authority and power of the Father. That most critical time and hour above all, which will decide the fate of mankind, is not theirs to inquire for. Note: Whatever pertains to the revelation of God's majesty should not be a subject of anxious thought for the Christians; both the government of the world and the Church and the revelation of the future glory are in His hands, to be revealed at His time. Jesus rather reminds the apostles that they will receive, will be given power, strength, which they should exert and put forth in the great duties of their calling. This power would be imparted to them when the Holy Ghost would come down upon them. The power to be effective witnesses for Christ is evidently meant. Filled with this strength from above, the disciples should bear witness, should tell what they had seen and heard of Christ, whose message they were to proclaim and who was to be the content of their message. In Jerusalem their work was to begin, but not to be confined to that city. In ever-widening circles their influence should extend, by virtue of the power given them through the Holy Ghost, throughout Judea, Samaria, and to the end of the world. There is neither limit nor boundary to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Note: The believers to this day have the same call and the same promise, but must observe also the same command, to be witnesses of Christ, of His salvation, to the uttermost parts of the earth.

The ascension of Christ: V. 9. **And when He had spoken these things, while they beheld, He was taken up; and a cloud received Him out of their sight.** V. 10. **And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as He went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel;** v. 11. **which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus which is taken up from you into heaven shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven.** Jesus had finished the words of His last commission to His disciples; He had entrusted to them the preaching of the Gospel to all nations, Matt. 28, 19. But while they were still looking at Him in anxious expectation, desiring to hear more of the words of comfort and strength out of His mouth, He was lifted up before them. He was in the act of blessing them with uplifted hands when He was taken from them. That is the picture of Christ which should be most dear to the memory of a Christian, with His hands stretched out in blessing over them. And a cloud, the symbol of divine glory, a truly regal chariot, shut the Master from the view of the disciples as He entered its bosom. There was no deception, no optical illusion; the ascension of Jesus is a historical fact which cannot be doubted. The Lord went up with a shout, with the sound of a trumpet, Ps. 47, 5. He has ascended up on high and led captivity captive, Ps. 68, 18. He has spoiled principalities and

powers, He has made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it, Col. 2, 15. He has ascended up far above all heavens, that He might fill all things, Eph. 4, 10. By His exaltation and ascension the Son of Man, also according to His human body, has entered into the full and unlimited use of His divine omnipresence. His gracious presence is therefore assured to His congregation on earth. He is now nearer to His believers than He was to His disciples in the days of His flesh. He is now sitting at the right hand of His heavenly Father. As our Brother He has assumed the full use of the divine power and majesty. He reigns with omnipotence over all things, but especially also over His Church. God has put all things under His feet, and has given Him to be the Head over all things to the Church, which is His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all, Eph. 1, 22. 23. By His Word and Sacrament He gathers unto Himself a congregation and Church upon earth. He works in and with His servants; He governs in the midst of His enemies. He preserves and protects His Church against all the enmity of the hostile world and against the very portals of hell. And His intercession before His heavenly Father makes our salvation a certainty, Rom. 8, 34.

While the disciples were still looking after their Lord with longing gaze, there suddenly appeared two men in white garments, in shining vestments, two angels that had just acted as escorts to the victorious Lord. These angels aroused the disciples from the revery into which they had sunk when gazing after their Lord. Addressing the apostles as men of Galilee, the heavenly messengers told them that the time spent in longingly wishing for the visible presence or return of Christ was wasted. And they gave them and all the believers a joyful assurance. This same Jesus, who was here taken up into heaven, apparently taken away from them, will come back again in the very same way in which they watched Him disappear from sight. Jesus will return visibly and bodily. With the same body, clothed in the same human nature, He will descend from heaven to judge the quick and the dead. That is the hope of all believers, that they will see Jesus with their own eyes. And in the mean time they live under His merciful reign and government, safe and secure, knowing that He is with them to the end of the world. This hope and certainty makes the believers willing to work for the Lord and to do the works of their calling on earth in His name and to His glory. The time is short, and His return is both sure and imminent, John 9, 4.

The Election of Matthias. Acts 1, 12—26.

The return to Jerusalem: V. 12. **Then returned they unto Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is from Jerusalem a Sabbath-day's journey.** V. 13. **And when they were come in, they went up into an upper room, where abode both Peter, and James, and John, and Andrew, Philip, and Thomas, Bartholomew, and Matthew, James, the son of Alphaeus, and Simon Zelotes, and Judas, the brother of James.** V. 14. **These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women and Mary, the mother of Jesus, and with His brethren.** The ascension of Jesus took place on Mount Olivet, east of Jerusalem, not very far from the town of Bethany, Luke 24, 50. Its distance from the Jewish capital is a Sabbath-day's journey, seven and a half stadia (a little over 1,500 yards). There is no contradiction between the accounts concerning the location of the various places and the exact spot where the ascension occurred. The summit of the mountain was approximately seven and one-half stadia from Jerusalem, Bethany was almost twice that distance, and the ascension took place in the Bethany neighborhood, on the southeastern slope of the hill. After the removal of their Lord in such a miraculous manner the disciples returned to Jerusalem. Note how exactly Luke describes the geographical location for his non-Jewish readers. At Jerusalem they were to wait for the great miracle of the outpouring of the Spirit. So they went to their usual meeting-place, to the upper chamber, probably in the house of one of the disciples. The disciples held public meetings in the Temple, Luke 24, 53, principally in the interest of mission-work. But for mutual consolation and encouragement they met at the houses of members of the congregation. The names of the chief men and of some of the women of this first congregation are here recorded. Peter is named first, as usual in the gospels; James, the elder, and John, the younger son of Zebedee, are next named. These three head the list as the special intimates of the Lord. Then comes Andrew, the brother of Peter; Philip, also of Bethsaida; Thomas, surnamed Didymus; Bartholomew, formerly known as Nathanael; Matthew, the publican, previously known as Levi; James, the son of Alphaeus; Simon the Zealot, of Cana; and finally Judas, the brother of James. All of these men had been preserved, though the storm of adversity occasioned by the Passion and death of Christ had struck them with great severity. But they all were now ready at their post, eager to begin their appointed work and waiting only for the promised power from on high, in the sending of the Holy Spirit. The eleven disciples spent the interval between Ascension and Pentecost in the best possible way; they were engaged continually and perseveringly in prayer, and all with one accord, in the same mind. Their prayers were both general and specific, for they deeply felt their weakness and spiritual poverty, and they were anxious to receive the gift of the Spirit, as promised by their Master. Their action is to be commended as an example for the believers of all time, to join both publicly and privately in the earnest

prayer for the gift of the Holy Ghost, without whose power and enlightenment we can do nothing. In this service of prayer the apostles were not alone, for there were with them some of the faithful women, probably those that had ministered to the Lord even in Galilee, and later had made the journey to Jerusalem to be present under the cross, witness the burial, and receive the message of the risen Lord. One woman is mentioned by name, Mary, the mother of Christ. She had not returned to Nazareth, since John was faithfully carrying out the request of the crucified Jesus to consider Mary his mother. Mary was undoubtedly regarded with great respect by the apostles, but there is no indication of the idolatrous homage which was later paid to her in various churches. To this small congregation or inner circle now belonged also the brethren (half-brothers, cousins) of the Lord, who are previously mentioned as unbelieving, John 7, 5. Just when they relinquished their unbelief and accepted Jesus as their Savior and Lord is not recorded in the gospels, but they were staunch adherents of Jesus from this time forward. Note: No matter how energetically a person has formerly opposed the Gospel of salvation, all this should be forgotten as soon as he accepts the Gospel-truth. The conviction of faith, in such a case, is usually coupled with the firm intention to work all the more humbly and sincerely for the once despised Master.

The address of Peter: V. 15. **And in those days Peter stood up in the midst of the disciples and said, (the number of names together were about an hundred and twenty,)** v. 16. **Men and brethren, this scripture must needs have been fulfilled which the Holy Ghost by the mouth of David spake before concerning Judas, which was guide to them that took Jesus.** V. 17. **For he was numbered with us, and had obtained part of this ministry.** V. 18. **Now this man purchased a field with the reward of iniquity; and falling headlong, he burst asunder in the midst, and all his bowels gushed out.** V. 19. **And it was known unto all the dwellers at Jerusalem, insomuch as that field is called in their proper tongue, Aceldama, that is to say, the field of blood.** V. 20. **For it is written in the Book of Psalms, Let his habitation be desolate, and let no man dwell therein; and his bishopric let another take.** "In those days," on one of the ten days intervening between the ascension of Christ and the pouring out of the Holy Spirit. At one of the meetings held during those days Peter assumed the initiative by rising up and standing before the disciples in addressing them on a very important matter. Upon this occasion there were some hundred and twenty disciples assembled together, probably all of those in Jerusalem that had professed adherence to the Lord at that time. Note that they are called brethren, bound together by a common faith and by a common love more closely than by the bonds of blood relationship. Mark also that Peter, although acting as spokesman, yet is one of the brethren; he acts with their consent, and does nothing in an imperious manner. Very solemnly Peter addresses the assembly as "men and brethren," the importance of his subject being reflected throughout his discourse. He points out that it was necessary first of all for the Scripture to be fulfilled in the defection of Judas Iscariot. His betrayal of Christ had been foretold, Ps. 41, 9. More than a thousand years before the Messiah had bitterly denounced the shamelessness of the traitor. It was Judas that was the leader of the enemies' band at the capture of Jesus, that showed the soldiers and servants the way to the probable place of Christ's abode on that night. Note with what tact Peter handles his delicate subject throughout, not heaping scorn or abuse upon the traitor, but speaking of him with all lenity. His example might well be followed at the present time, no matter whose death is spoken about. Judas had been numbered with the twelve apostles; he had been chosen by the Lord as one of the men that were to serve as His messengers and ambassadors to bring the Gospel to all people; he had obtained a lot, or share, in this ministry by actual selection of Jesus; he was supposed to receive a charge as well as the other apostles actually did. The call of Jesus is always sincere and with the intention of keeping the believer at His side; the unbeliever's defection must be placed entirely to his own charge.

Verses 18 and 19 are probably to be regarded as a note inserted by Luke for the understanding of the Gentile readers. Judas had received a certain sum of money, thirty denarii, the price of a slave, as the price of blood for the betrayal of his Master. When he was then seized by repentance and fear on account of his horrible deed, he brought back the money to the high priests, and since they refused to accept it, he threw it into the Temple. With this money, which the hypocritical Jewish leaders still considered as belonging to Judas, they bought the potter's field, which thus was really the property of Judas, and might have been claimed by his heirs. Thus the reward of iniquity, of unrighteousness, bought the burial-ground for the unknown strangers. This fact, especially after the terrible end of the traitor, became known throughout the city, and that field, since all the inhabitants of the city knew the history of that piece of ground therefore soon acquired a name, in the Aramaic, or Chaldeo-Syriac, language Akeldama, which means "a field of blood," bought with the price of the life or blood of the Lord Jesus. And Judas himself had a horrible end. It seems that after he hanged himself, the rope broke, and he pitched over backward down some declivity, with the result that his body burst open and all his intestines gushed forth. That was evidently the

judgment of God upon this hardened sinner; he had gone to the place provided for such as he was — the place of the damned. But in all these happenings, horrible as they sound in the narration, Peter finds the fulfilment of Scriptures. In Ps. 69, 25 the Lord had prophesied: Let their habitation be desolate; and let none dwell in their tents, and in Ps. 109, 8: Let another take his office. The exposition of Peter shows that these passages found their strictest fulfilment in Judas Iscariot and his fate, as a warning to all men for all times. The habitation of Judas had become desolate; he had lost his ministry, his office, when he denied the faith and betrayed his Lord. Note the deep impression which the end of the traitor had made upon the other disciples, and how they heeded the warning contained in the story, just as all believers will remember the horrible end of the apostates, either here or hereafter, lest they fall into the same example of unbelief.

The choosing of Matthias: V. 21. **Wherefore of these men which have companied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us,** v. 22. **beginning from the baptism of John, unto that same day that He was taken up from us, must one be ordained to be a witness with us of His resurrection.** V. 23. **And they appointed two, Joseph, called Barsabas, who was surnamed Justus, and Matthias.** V. 24. **And they prayed and said, Thou, Lord, which knowest the hearts of all men, show whether of these two Thou hast chosen,** v. 25. **that he may take part of this ministry and apostleship from which Judas by transgression fell, that he might go to his own place.** V. 26. **And they gave forth their lots; and the lot fell upon Matthias; and he was numbered with the eleven apostles.** Having briefly referred to the regrettable vacancy in the number of the apostles, Peter now makes a proposal as to the selection of a man to succeed Judas in the high office which he had held. He stated that it was necessary for them to choose some one of the disciples that had associated with them and with Jesus from the very beginning, one that had been their companion during the whole time that Jesus went in and out before them, one that had, in other words, been a witness of the whole course of Christ's life, beginning with His baptism by John and ending with the day of His ascension from their midst. Note that Peter speaks of the ascended Christ as a human being, as being still in the flesh, although he incidentally calls Him Lord, thus yielding to Him full divine honor and majesty. But the chief point to be taken into account was this, that the man to be chosen must be a thoroughly competent witness of the resurrection of Christ. The resurrection of Christ, as St. Paul shows 1 Cor. 15, is the seal of God upon the completed work of redemption of Jesus. Without its certainty established, Christianity becomes an illusion and a farce. It is self-evident that the experience of matters of fact went hand in hand with the possession of a firm faith in the matters witnessed. The apostles were called to testify of that which they had seen and heard with their own eyes. The Church has received the Gospel of Christ out of the mouth of credible eye- and ear-witnesses. Peter's proposal having been accepted by the assembly, they put forward, or nominated, two men for the vacancy, one Joseph Barsabas, apparently one of the seventy disciples, whose surname Justus had been adopted after the custom of the time, and Matthias. These two men may have been the only two that possessed all the qualifications laid down by Peter. Concerning these two men, the candidates for the vacant position in the number of the apostles, the disciples assembled now made an earnest prayer. They addressed their prayer, literally, to the Heart-knower, to their risen Lord, Jesus Christ. Cp. Jer. 17, 10. The thoughts and prayers of all true Christians are now ever directed to their exalted Lord and Savior. He knows all things; He guides all things in the interest of His believers and for their benefit. The Lord knows the hearts of men, John 2, 25; He was able to judge exactly as to the qualifications of either candidate; His choosing would not have to be the result of long and deliberate weighing and reflecting. He should merely designate His choice of these two men, in order that the chosen man might take the place of the ministry and apostleship left vacant by Judas. Note once more the tactful reference to the traitor, as having gone "to his own place." As the words read, they may refer as well to the place of reward as to that of punishment. The disciples very properly leave the decision in this grave matter to the great Judge above, and do not themselves pronounce the condemnation, although it is included that Judas went to the place to which the hypocrites and apostates go after death. Mark also: The prayer of the disciples is a model of its kind. "The petitioners had a single object for which they bowed before the Lord, and to the proper presentation of this they confine their words. They do not repeat a thought, nor do they elaborate one beyond the point of perspicuity. . . . So brief a prayer on so important an occasion would in this voluble age be scarcely regarded as a prayer at all." 4) Having thus sanctified the occasion with the Word of God and with prayer, the disciples were ready to proceed to the selection of the twelfth apostle. To do this, they gave forth their lots. Just how this was done is not certain. But it is probable that the usage prevailing in the Old Testament was observed. "Tablets on which the names of Joseph and Matthias were written, were employed; these were shaken in the vase or other vessel in which

4) McGarvey, *New Commentary on Acts*, 16. 17.

they had been deposited, and the lot which first fell out furnished the decision." 5) Cp. 1 Chron. 24, 5; 25, 8; Lev. 16, 8; Num. 34, 13. Matthias having been designated in this manner, he was now henceforth numbered with the eleven apostles, as the twelfth. The manner of selecting the man to fill the vacancy left by the defection of Judas was an unusual one, and undoubtedly resorted to in this case by a special command of God. The method, therefore, is not to be considered an example to be followed under similar circumstances. But the use of the Word of God and the earnest appeal to the Lord to direct the choice of officers of the Church according to His will and for the welfare of His kingdom, should never be lacking at any meeting for the purpose of electing officers in a Christian congregation.

5) Schaff, *Commentary, Acts*, 21.

Summary. *The author gives a brief account of the last speeches of the Lord, of His ascension, of the meeting of the disciples, and of the election of Matthias.*

CHAPTER 2.

The Pentecost Miracle. Acts 2, 1—13.

The apostles filled with the Holy Spirit: V. 1. **And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place.** V. 2. **And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting.** V. 3. **And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them.** V. 4. **And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance.** In the complete fulfilling of the day of Pentecost, when the day was altogether filled up, according to Hebrew manner of speaking, when it had altogether come. As Luke used the word, it indicates that this day, at this time, brought the fulfilment of the earnest and eager expectation of the disciples, and that its importance should therefore be remembered forever. It was the day of Pentecost, the fiftieth day after Easter, the second great festival of the Jewish church-year, celebrated on the day after the completion of seven full weeks after the second day of the Passover week, when the firstlings of the barley harvest were waved before the Lord. On this day, which in that year just happened to be a Sunday, they all were assembled together. This has been understood of the twelve apostles alone, who were spoken of in the last verse of chapter one. But the fact that the Pentecostal gifts, though exercised by the apostles first, were not confined to them, but were used by other disciples as well, makes it more plausible to assume that the entire congregation of Jerusalem, the hundred and twenty disciples, chap. 1, 15, and even others that had come to Jerusalem for the festival, were assembled together. In one place they were gathered together, and although the Temple is not specified as in other places, chap. 3, 2. 11; 5, 21, the fact that there was such a large assembly, and that afterwards thousands of people became witnesses of the miracle, indicates that an upper room in the city would have been inadequate, and that the miracle probably occurred in one of the Temple-halls adjoining the spacious courts. And there happened suddenly out of heaven a sound as of a mighty wind, that bore along with great power. The sound came without warning or visible cause, no storm-clouds having gathered and the serenity of the sky being unmarred by any indication of a disturbance. Out of the sky the sound proceeded with a volume of noise which immediately attracted attention to its rushing sibilance, since it was directed to that one house or hall where the disciples were assembled. The supernatural manifestation continued even inside the hall, making both walls and ceiling resound with its violence. Incidentally, a second phenomenon was made manifest. Forked tongues appeared above the disciples, like fire in their appearance and brightness. The text makes it seem as though there was originally a great flame as of fire which accompanied the rushing sound, from which now the smaller flames divided or parted themselves off. And so the semblance of fire sat upon every one of them. The fire and the flames were symbols of the audible tongues in which the apostles were presently to speak. For while the phenomenon was visible to all those present, the real and most important miracle of Pentecost took place. They were all filled with the Holy Ghost. All the preceding manifestations were but the heralds of the Spirit, who now came down to take possession of the hearts and minds of the disciples with His miraculous gifts. Not as though the apostles had not had the Spirit before. They had received Him both when they believed in Christ as their Savior and especially on Easter evening, with the commission of the Lord, John 20, 22. 23. But the apostles had shown only a very small measure of understanding in spiritual things, and as for power to work and courage to confess their Lord, all these had been strangely and lamentably absent. But here they received the Spirit in special measure; not only was the faith of their hearts confirmed as never before, but they were also given an unusual amount of strength, both to labor and to endure. And the strongest feature of this imparting of the Spirit consisted in the gift of miracles,

which was immediately manifested in them. For they now began to speak, in connected discourse, in other, strange tongues, in languages and dialects of which, for the most part, they had probably never heard. The Holy Ghost not merely taught them the various languages for their own understanding, but actually gave them the ability to express themselves correctly in these tongues. It was a wonderful manifestation and transference of miraculous powers. The account is so clear that there can be no question in the unprejudiced mind as to the miracle set before us in this narrative, namely, that the foreign languages became to the unlearned fishermen of Galilee as their own, that they had a perfect command of the various languages and could express themselves freely, as occasion offered. And all this was wrought by the Spirit, who gave them utterance and enabled them to speak the oracles of God. "The Holy Spirit thus penetrated their hearts that in one moment they had the right understanding of God and of His Son Jesus Christ, and understood the whole Scriptures, and had such courage that they do not keep this understanding for themselves, but dare to confess it freely and openly. . . . He comes down and fills the hearts of the disciples, who formerly sat there in grief and fear, and gives them fiery tongues that they become courageous, and preach freely of Christ, and fear nothing." 6)

The effect of the miracle upon the multitude: **V. 5. And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven. V. 6. Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together and were confounded, because that every man heard them speak in his own language. V. 7. And they were all amazed and marveled, saying one to another, Behold, are not all these which speak Galileans? V. 8. And how hear we every man in our own tongue wherein we were born? V. 9. Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judea, and Cappadocia, in Pontus, and Asia, v. 10. Phrygia, and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in the parts of Libya about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes, v. 11. Cretes and Arabians; we do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God. V. 12. And they were all amazed, and were in doubt, saying one to another, What meaneth this? V. 13. Others, mocking, said, These men are full of new wine.** Since this was the festival of Pentecost, one of the feasts upon which all the Jews were to appear at Jerusalem, Ex. 23, 13—17; Deut. 16, there were people from all parts of the world living, or sojourning for the time, in Jerusalem. Many of them that had formerly lived in distant countries may have returned to the city of their fathers in order to spend their declining years in their sacred city and to die within sight of the Temple. The people here referred to were sincere, devout men, Luke 2, 25, not hypocrites like the Jewish rulers. And they hailed from every nation under heaven. Since the time of the Babylonian exile the merchandizing proclivities of the Jews had drawn them out into other countries more and more. In some countries, as in Egypt, there were large colonies of them, with influential men of the class of Philo. And that they were by no means few in number throughout Asia Minor, as well as in parts of Greece and in Italy, appears from the many passages in Acts in which the synagogs of the Jews are mentioned. These Jews, known as the Jews of the Diaspora, spoke the language of the people among whom they lived, retaining the Hebrew only for Sabbath services. Now when that great sound, as of the mighty wind, was heard, the attention of all the hearers was naturally directed to the hall where the apostles and disciples were assembled, and a great multitude came together to find out the reason for this supernatural occurrence. And what they saw and heard filled their minds with such trouble and perturbation that they were no longer sure of their senses; they were altogether confounded and mixed up. For here they heard, every man, the language of the people where he had been born. There were present Eastern or Babylonian Jews, Parthians, from the region of the Caspian Sea, Medes, from the southwestern shore of the same sea, Elamites, in what is now western Persia, dwellers in Mesopotamia, along the Euphrates and Tigris rivers; there were present Syrian Jews, from Judea, the southern part of what is now Syria, from Cappadocia, in eastern Asia Minor, from Pontus, south of the Black Sea, from Asia, the parts of western Asia Minor in general, along the Aegean Sea, from Phrygia, in western Asia Minor, from Pamphylia, in southern Asia Minor; there were present Egyptian Jews, from Egypt itself, as well as from the parts of Libya in the western part, about Cyrene, the modern Tripoli; there were present Roman Jews, sojourners from that city. And finally Luke mentions Jews from the island of Crete, in the Mediterranean, and from Arabia, as being present in only small numbers. Both Jews and proselytes were represented in the assembly, such as belonged to the Jewish nation by birth, and such as had become proselytes of the gate (by acknowledging the truth of the Jewish teaching) or of righteousness (by formally accepting all the rites and ceremonies, as well as the teaching). And all the various members of this big gathering heard the apostles speak in their own tongue, fluently addressing them, as though they had spoken the dialects and languages all their life. Such a miracle was unheard of, and Luke exhausts his vocabulary in trying to describe its effect

6) Luther, quoted in Stoeckhardt, *Biblische Geschichte des Neuen Testaments*, 334.

upon the multitude: they were confounded, they were amazed, they marveled, they were perplexed, they asked one another as to the meaning of the wonderful thing they were witnessing. And all the while the apostles were preaching the great and wonderful works of God, namely, that God had fulfilled the prophecies made to their fathers, that He had sent His Son Jesus to work the redemption of the whole world, and that this salvation was now being offered to all of them without exception.7) But while the majority of the assembled Jews were ready to accept the evidence of an extraordinary manifestation of God's power in these unlearned Galileans, as they called them, there were also some that scoffed and mocked, derisively declaring that the apostles were full of sweet wine, either the must of grapes still in the fermenting state or a choice sweet wine in use in Palestine. Note: Wherever the Spirit of God works through the Word, there are always some that accept the glorious truth, while others are wilfully offended and mock at the Spirit that lives in the Christians.

The Sermon of Peter and Its Effect.

Acts 2, 14—47.

The introduction of the sermon: V. 14. **But Peter, standing up with the Eleven, lifted up his voice and said unto them, Ye men of Judea, and all ye that dwell at Jerusalem, be this known unto you, and hearken to my words;** v. 15. **for these are not drunken, as ye suppose, seeing it is but the third hour of the day.** V. 16. **But this is that which was spoken by the Prophet Joel,** v. 17. **And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of My Spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams;** v. 18. **and on My servants and on My handmaidens I will pour out in those days of My Spirit; and they shall prophesy;** v. 19. **and I will show wonders in heaven above and signs in the earth beneath; blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke;** v. 20. **the sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before that great and notable day of the Lord come;** v. 21. **and it shall come to pass that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.** While the gift of tongues was being transmitted to the apostles, it was not that they were in a state of ecstasy, making them detached from the affairs going on about them. They were perfectly sane and rational. And Peter heard the remark of the scoffers. Up to this time the apostles had been sitting down; but now Peter arose, and the Eleven with him, to enter an emphatic protest against this blasphemous insinuation, which, incidentally, was very foolish. As spokesman of the Twelve, Peter purposely raised his voice in order to make himself understood by the entire audience, and then spoke solemnly and impressively, in the name of God. He addresses the assembled multitude very respectfully as "men of Judea and dwellers in Jerusalem," thus distinguishing between the inhabitants and the sojourners for the period of the festival. He wanted to make something known to them, he wanted to bring a fact to their attention, and therefore he asks them all to give ear, to listen closely to his words, his sayings, his informal talk. He brings out, first of all, the meaning of the Pentecost miracle. First of all, he refutes the charge that these men might be intoxicated. It was now only the third hour of the day, nine o'clock in the morning, and therefore the time itself made it highly improbable that these men should be drunken. But the real refutation of the insinuation came with the explanation of the miracle. The manifestation which they had witnessed was one due to the Spirit of God, in fulfilment of the prophecy of Joel, chap. 2, 28—32. God Himself had promised through this prophet that in the latter days of the world He would pour out of His Spirit upon all flesh, that as the result of this miracle both the sons and the daughters of the people would prophesy, would be able to unfold the future, that the young men would see visions and the old men would receive revelations in dreams. And still more was included in this miraculous occurrence. For even the bonded servants, the slaves, both male and female, would receive the same gift of the Holy Ghost, so that they, too, would be enabled to prophesy. Persons of all nationalities and of every rank and station in life would thus become partakers of the Spirit and His wonderful gifts. And this phenomenon would not be confined to a single occasion, but would continue until the day when God would show and give miracles in the heaven or sky above and signs of His majesty on the earth beneath, blood, and fire, and smoky vapor. The sun would be changed entirely, losing his brightness and turning into darkness, and the moon likewise would be changed into a bloody mass. Bloodshed and devastation of war would precede that last great day of the Lord, whose purpose will clearly be visible as soon as it dawns over the demoralized world. Cp. 1 Thess. 5, 2; 1 Cor. 1, 8; 2 Cor. 1, 14; 2 Thess. 2, 8. The awful aspects of the end of the world are here held up to the startled gaze of the multitude, as a warning cry to repentance. But, in the mean time, there is also a glorious promise held out to all that turn to the Lord in repentance and faith, and fervently call upon His name as that of the only Savior. Note: We Christians live in the time of the fulfilment of Joel's prophecy, in the time of the New Testament Pentecost. The preaching of Christ, which was begun by the lowly fishermen of

7) Luther, 13b, 2060. 2061.

Galilee, has gone out into all the world. And through this Gospel the exalted Christ, God Himself, is sending, pouring out His Spirit. The crucified Christ, now exalted to the right hand of God, is the almighty God.8) He is gathering unto Himself His Church out of all nations of the world. Sons and daughters, old and young, servants and maids, receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. And though the working of the Spirit is not manifested in the same way as in the early days of the Church, in visions, in dreams, in prophecy, yet the Spirit lives in the hearts of the believers, gives them the knowledge of Jesus Christ, their Savior, and urges them to speak of that which they believe so firmly, and to call upon the name of the Lord. The pouring out of the Spirit is the last of the great miracles of God until the great day of His returning to Judgment. In the mean time, we have the comfort that our salvation is secure in Him. "What does it mean 'to save'? It means to deliver from sin and death. For he that wants to be saved must not be under the Law, but under grace. But if he should not be under the Law, but under grace, then he must not be under sin. If he is under, in the power of, sin, then he is under the Law, that is, under the wrath of God, under eternal death and damnation, and under the power of the devil. But if he is to be saved, then all these enemies, sin, death, devil, must be removed. Therefore to save means nothing else than to deliver and make free from sin and death, from the wrath of God and the power of the devil, from the Law and from a bad conscience. Now Peter says, from the Prophet Joel: The Lord that pours out His Holy Spirit upon all flesh will save all that call upon His name, that is, by faith in Him He will deliver from sin and death." 9)

Peter's testimony of Jesus: V. 22. **Ye men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by Him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know:** v. 23. **Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain;** v. 24. **whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that He should be holden of it.** Peter here launches forth into his sermon proper, to testify of Christ as David's Son and David's Lord. He addresses his hearers as Israelites, as members of the covenant nation of God, and asks them again to mark well his words. He places the name of Jesus the Nazarene at the head of this section, in order properly to emphasize his intention of making Jesus the center of his discussion. This Jesus had been approved by God unto them; God had clearly shown that Jesus was His ambassador to the Jews, the demonstrations of His power in the Word and work of Jesus being manifest throughout. The powers, wonders, and signs which He performed had been done through Him in their midst by God, just as He Himself had argued. Peter tells the Jews outright that they were very well aware of these facts, that it was impossible for them to deny a single one of them, John 11, 47. Peter furthermore informed the Jews that it was in accordance with God's preordained purpose, with His constituted will and foreknowledge, that Jesus was delivered into their power, affixed to the cross and slain with wicked hands, and not because He had been overcome by their strength. And he finally tells his audience boldly that God had raised Jesus from death, by loosening and taking away the pangs of death, for it was not possible for death to hold the Prince of Life. Death had ensnared Him, but could not hold his prey. Like sledge-hammer blows the powerful, brief statement of these facts falls from the lips of Peter, facts which make his hearers reel and stagger, and which force the conviction upon them that this man Peter must be telling the truth. "We might challenge the world to find a parallel to it in the speeches of her orators or the songs of her poets. There is not such a thunderbolt in all the burdens of the prophets of Israel, or among the voices which echo through the Apocalypse." 10) For us Christians it is most consoling that the climax of this section is reached in the magnificent statement: Whom God hath raised up. Upon the fact of the resurrection of Jesus we place our hope of everlasting salvation.

The proof from David: V. 25. **For David speaketh concerning Him, I foresaw the Lord always before My face, for He is on My right hand, that I should not be moved;** v. 26. **therefore did My heart rejoice, and My tongue was glad; moreover, also My flesh shall rest in hope;** v. 27. **because Thou wilt not leave My soul in hell, neither wilt Thou suffer Thine Holy One to see corruption.** V. 28. **Thou hast made known to Me the ways of life; Thou shalt make Me full of joy with Thy countenance.** Peter had stated to the Jews that Jesus had been delivered according to the foreknowledge of God and that God had raised Him up from the dead. Since these two statements required proof, the apostle proceeds to give it from Scriptures. He quotes Ps. 16, 8—11. There David says certain facts of the Lord, and the Messiah speaks through him. The Messiah declares that He beholds the Lord, Jehovah, before His face always; He is in the bosom of the Father from everlasting to everlasting. God, His heavenly Father, is at His right hand, as His Defense and Helper, so that He could not become permanently dejected. For that

8) Luther, 13 b, 2066.
9) Luther, 13 b, 2070. 2071.
10) McGarvey, *New Commentary on Acts*, 30.

reason the Messiah's heart is full of gladness and His tongue is full of exultation, His soul is full of joyful confidence. For His flesh, His living, animate body, may dwell in cheerful hope; the Messiah's entire life could be spent in a confident and calm contemplation of the end which was awaiting Him. For the Lord, His heavenly Father, would not give up, not desert, His soul in the kingdom of death, would not permit Him to become the permanent prey of death, neither would He give His Holy One to see corruption. He knows and is convinced that His soul will not be given up and abandoned in the abode of the dead and destruction, that His body will not rot in the grave according to the common experience of mankind. In distinction from this the Lord has made known to the Messiah the ways of life; He has filled Him with gladness as being in His presence without interruption. For the Messiah no death would, even for a moment, sever the union between Him and His God and Lord. Note: The words of the Psalm are a beautiful and clear exposition of the Messiah concerning His death and the glorification which would be His through His death.

The application of the prophecy: V. 29. **Men and brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulcher is with us unto this day.** V. 30. **Therefore, being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, He would raise up Christ to sit on his throne,** v. 31. **he, seeing this before, spake of the resurrection of Christ, that His soul was not left in hell, neither His flesh did see corruption.** V. 32. **This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses.** Peter, in this section of his sermon, uses the intimate and confidential address "men and brethren." He wants to make the people feel that it is in their interest to hear him out in his argument. He had quoted a passage from a Psalm which, as the people knew, was written by David, a passage held throughout in the first person. The question therefore was as to who was speaking when David wrote, he himself or some one else. Now concerning David, whom Peter here calls a patriarch, the ancestor of a kingly race, he could freely say, and without any fear of contradiction, that he died and was buried, his grave being in Jerusalem and well known to all Jews. So the death of David was a fact, and the presence of his tomb implied that this ancestor of kings, on his part, had seen corruption. Of himself David, then, had assuredly not spoken. On the other hand, as the Jews knew, he held the position of a prophet, one through whom the Lord foretold the future, and as such he knew, by a revelation of God, that God had promised him with an oath that a descendant of his would sit upon his throne. Cp. 2 Sam. 7, 12. 13. With this knowledge in mind, David wrote this prophecy of the 16th Psalm, speaking of the resurrection of Christ, that He would not be abandoned in the kingdom of death, and that His flesh would not see corruption. Thus Peter proved clearly from his text that Jesus suffered death according to a predetermined and expressed aim of God, but that death could not hold Him, that He plainly must and did arise from the dead. And that this prophecy has been fulfilled the apostles also, the twelve men standing before them, could testify; they were witnesses of the resurrection of Jesus. Their eyes, their senses, did not deceive them; they had been with the risen Lord; they had received His commission. This fact is of great comfort also to us, who place our faith in the message of the risen Lord, as recorded by these witnesses of His resurrection.

The conclusion of Peter's sermon: V. 33. **Therefore, being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, He hath shed forth this which ye now see and hear.** V. 34. **For David is not ascended into the heavens; but he saith himself, The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit Thou on My right hand,** v. 35. **until I make Thy foes Thy footstool.** V. 36. **Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God hath made that same Jesus whom ye have crucified both Lord and Christ.** A powerful peroration or conclusion! After his testimony concerning the resurrection of Jesus there was one more point which Peter was bound to make, namely, the proof of Christ's exaltation into glory, with the attendant majesty and power. In this case he did not cite the testimony of the apostles' personal witnessing, since this step of Christ's glorification had been hidden from human eyes. But the ascension and exaltation was a necessary consequence of the resurrection. Jesus was by the right hand of God exalted, raised by the omnipotent power of God to the highest dignity in the realms of glory; Jesus received the promise of the Holy Spirit from the Father; Jesus poured the Spirit out upon the disciples, as the Jews were now witnessing to their great astonishment, both with their eyes in seeing the tongues of fire and with their ears in hearing the unlearned fishermen declare the great wonders of God in more than a dozen languages and dialects. It was testimony of a kind which no sane man among the hearers would dream of calling into question. And this miracle of the exalted Christ was, in turn, predicted in the Old Testament, another fact which should convince them of the truth of Peter's remarks. For David, as they well knew, had not ascended into heaven. The words therefore which he had written, Ps. 110, 1: The Lord said to my Lord, Sit at My right hand till I place Thine enemies as a footstool for Thy feet, could not apply to David. The passage, then, as even the Jews ad-

mitted, must refer to Christ; the words had found their fulfilment in the ascension of Jesus. Having therefore, by the soundest kind of evidence, brought proof for the statements which he made in his introduction, Peter was ready for the logical, powerful conclusion and application. With convincing confidence and startling directness he appeals not only to the present hearers, but to the whole house of Israel whom they represented, to have the correct understanding of the facts brought out by his sermon, namely, that God had made that same Jesus whom they had crucified both Lord and Christ. He had made Him Lord by exalting Him to the everlasting throne of majesty and power; and He had made Him Christ by thus establishing all the prophecies of old concerning the Messiah as referring to Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus and His entire ministry were vindicated in a most glorious and incontrovertible manner. Such is the preaching of Christ which should obtain in the Christian Church at all times. That is the content of all Christian preaching: Jesus Christ, true God and man, crucified and resurrected, our Lord and Savior.

The immediate effect of the sermon: V. 37. **Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?** V. 38. **Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.** V. 39. **For the promise is unto you and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord, our God, shall call.** V. 40. **And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation.** Peter had closed his sermon with the words: Both Lord and Christ has God made this Jesus whom you crucified. These concluding words, coming after his powerful presentation of truth, could not fail to have their effect. They penetrated to the heart of the hearers, they pierced the heart. The men were moved most deeply, they were filled with compunction and remorse. They felt, with the keen misery of an evil conscience, that they were murderers in the sight of God. That is the beginning of repentance: a keen realization of sin and a deep sorrow over the offense thus offered to God. This is brought out by the eager, uneasy question of the hearers: What shall we do, men and brethren? They do not despair on account of the greatness of their sin, but turn to Peter for help in their great trouble. It was a momentous question, and it received a clear answer. The first thing Peter urges them to do is to repent truly and sincerely, to admit all guilt before the face of God without reserve and equivocation, Prov. 28, 13. And the second step is that every one of those whose heart was thus filled with sorrow and remorse should be baptized on or in the name of Jesus Christ. Christian Baptism is made in the name of Jesus, because the work of Jesus made the gift of Baptism possible, since it is made unto remission of sins. Forgiveness of sins, full pardon, is given to the poor sinner through the washing of regeneration, Titus 3, 5. Baptism is not a mere symbol or form of initiation into the brotherhood of believers, nor is it a work by which remission of sins is earned. The water of Baptism, through the power of the Word which is in and with the water, transmits and gives the remission of sins as earned by Jesus Christ. Note: Peter uses both the Law and the Gospel, the former to work a full and proper realization of sinfulness, the latter to open the floodgates of God's mercy to the poor sinners. And there is still a third point which Peter brings out. Where repentance and faith are found in the heart, there the gift of the Holy Ghost is assured, there God freely, out of pure mercy, sheds forth the Holy Ghost. The Spirit lives in the hearts of those that are baptized and believe on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and His constant work is to sanctify the believers. Through the indwelling of the Spirit we are enabled to bring forth the fruits of the Spirit. This application Peter makes very emphatic, declaring that the promise of God unto salvation is unto them, has reference to them and to their children, is earnestly intended for them. Note that the Gospel promise of God, also in regard to the remission of sins as transmitted through Baptism, is not only to the adults, but also to the children; the children are very decidedly included in the command to baptize. And the promise of the Gospel was not confined to the Jews and their nation, but was intended also for all those at a distance, as many as God would call to receive the benefits and blessings of His mercy. It is the gracious work of God, to exhibit the power of His mercy also among the Gentiles, to have His Word accepted among them to their salvation, to call them unto Himself, as His own children. There is no limit to the universality of this promise nor to the beauty of its import. Here Luke closes the verbal account of Peter's discourse, merely adding that he, and undoubtedly the other apostles as well, very earnestly testified, with many additional arguments. And to his testimony he added exhortation, in order to confirm and strengthen the newborn faith of their hearts, urging them to be or become saved, to save their souls by separating themselves from the perverse, godless generation of this world. The power to do so came to them by faith, the strength of God being present in them, and they must exercise this power at once, Phil. 2, 12. It is necessary that Christians at all times make use of the power of God in them which they have received by faith.

The effect of the sermon in the establishment and progress of the Church: V. 41. **Then they**

that gladly received his word were baptized; and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls. V. 42. And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers. V. 43. And fear came upon every soul; and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles. V. 44. And all that believed were together, and had all things common; v. 45. and sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need. V. 46. And they, continuing daily with one accord in the Temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, v. 47. praising God, and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the Church daily such as should be saved. The Word of God which had been preached with such power and followed up with such earnest exhortations, did not remain without fruit. By the working of the same Spirit whose miraculous power was exhibited before their eyes, some of the people present, a considerable number of the hearers, received the Word by faith, they accepted Jesus of Nazareth as the promised Messiah and they were baptized. The Baptism in the name of Jesus Christ served for the strengthening of their faith in the Word of the Gospel, and for the confirming and sealing of their salvation in Christ, of which Peter had testified. It is immaterial whether this great number of people that were thus added to, that joined the ranks of, the disciples, were baptized by immersion (the necessary facilities being present in Jerusalem, as the defenders of immersion declare) or not, since the mode of Baptism is not prescribed in Holy Scriptures. There are a good many arguments of probability against immersion. But be that as it may, the fact is that these people were added to, received into, the Christian Church by the Sacrament of Baptism, their number being about three thousand souls. The souls that are won for Christ are thereby added to His Church.

Luke now sketches a picture of the first Christian congregation of Jerusalem, with the nucleus of the apostles and the hundred and twenty disciples, and with the three thousand Pentecost converts as the body. The growth of the Church was not only in numbers, but also in faith and charity. The members of the congregation continued, persevered, with great fidelity and devotion, in the teaching, in the doctrine of the apostles. These men, set and ordained by Christ as the teachers of all Christendom, were at that time the teachers of the congregation at Jerusalem. And their doctrine was the doctrine of Christ; they taught what they had heard from Christ; their word was the Word of God. By remaining steadfastly in this Word, the disciples also preserved fellowship. They were united in the same faith and love toward their Lord and Master; they were in communion with one another and in union with Christ and the Father, a wonderful, blessed intimacy, by which they were attached more closely to one another than brothers and sisters according to the flesh. Each one felt the most solicitous concern for the joys and sorrows of the other. Their intimate fellowship was expressed in the breaking of bread. If this expression does not refer exclusively to the celebration of Holy Communion, it certainly does not exclude the Sacrament. Cp. 1 Cor. 10, 16. It plainly does not refer to an ordinary meal, and was probably used by Luke to describe briefly the common meal which the believers connected with the celebration of the Lord's Supper in the early days of the Church. And as the believers heard the Word, as they observed the Eucharist, so they also were diligent, assiduous, in public prayer. By common prayer, praise, and thanksgiving the disciples of Jerusalem manifested their brotherly fellowship and their unity of spirit. All these facts could, of course, not remain hidden from the people of the city, even if the members of the congregation had intended it so. The Christians' mode of living was a continual confession and admonition to all the inhabitants of the city. The result was that many of the Jews, as many as came into contact with the believers, were filled with a great fear; the solemn awe which the miracles and signs of the apostles inspired was augmented by the reverence demanded by their blameless living. The presence of God and the exalted Christ, through the manifest working of the Spirit, in the midst of the congregation, had to be admitted by all that came into contact with them. And this awe served the spread of the Gospel as well; it acted as a curb upon the hatred of the Jews, hindering them from showing any open manifestation of their enmity. It was God's intention that the young plant of His Church was to enjoy a peaceful growth for a season.

Meanwhile the brotherly love of the disciples showed its power in their life and works. They were together; their hearts and minds were directed to their common cause, a fact which naturally caused them to meet as often as possible, either in the Temple or in private houses, and not only for public services, but also for social intercourse in a true Christlike spirit. And they held all things in common; they did not practise communism, they did not abrogate the right of private property. Not the possession, but the use and benefit of the goods was common. Cp. chap. 4, 32. Every member of the congregation considered his property as a talent of the Lord, with which he was to serve his neighbor. In many cases this brotherly love effected still more. Their possessions and goods, all their property, they sold and divided the proceeds among all the brethren, just as the needs demanded it. That

was not a law proposed or enforced by the apostles, but a free manifestation of true charity. The well-to-do Christians were willing and eager to make these sacrifices when it was evident that this was the only way in which the needs of the brethren could be supplied. There was none of the supercilious aloofness which now characterizes the intercourse of the rich with the poor. Such expressions of love had seldom, if ever, been seen on the earth before. And all this was done without any attempt at ostentation. As a matter of course, the believers, with one accord, in full unity of the spirit, held their public meetings in the Temple, where they had an opportunity to testify to the other members of their nation concerning the hope which animated them. And not only were daily meetings held in the Temple, but they also met from house to house, mainly for the celebration of the Holy Communion and of the common meal known as the Agape, where they partook of food together with great gladness or exultation and incidentally with all simplicity of heart. The richer members were not indignant over the fact that the poorer brethren were partaking of the food provided by their bounty, nor did they deem it beneath their dignity to sit at the same table. And the poor members possessed nothing of poverty's foolish pride on account of being obliged to accept the largess of others. They were all united in that one great work, to give praise to God for all the gifts which He had bestowed upon them. No wonder that they found favor with all the people. Every honest, upright Jew would naturally esteem the believers for the simplicity, purity, and charity of their lives. And the confession of the mouth being seconded and confirmed by the evidence of works, the result was that additions to the number of the believers were daily recorded. But Luke expressly states that the Lord added such as should be saved to the congregation. The conversion of every person is the Lord's doing all alone, and is the result of His gracious and good will for the salvation of sinners. Note: The congregation at Jerusalem throughout is a shining example to the Christian congregations and to the believers of all times. If that same love for the Word of God, for the use of the Sacrament, if that same unselfish charity toward the brethren were evident in our days, every congregation would stand out in the same way. And such is the will of Christ, the Head of the Church.

Summary. *The miracle of Pentecost is followed by a long and powerful sermon of Peter, setting forth Jesus as the Lord and Christ, whose effect is seen in the sound establishment of the first Christian congregation at Jerusalem.*

CHAPTER 3.

The Healing of the Lame Man.

Acts 3, 1—11.

The lame beggar: V. 1. **Now Peter and John went up together into the Temple at the hour of prayer, being the ninth hour. V. 2. And a certain man lame from his mother's womb was carried, whom they laid daily at the gate of the Temple which is called Beautiful, to ask alms of them that entered into the Temple; v. 3. who, seeing Peter and John about to go into the Temple, asked an alms.** Of the many signs and wonders which the apostles performed for the confirmation of their teaching, chap. 2, 43, Luke here narrates one which stands out from the rest by virtue of the amount of attention it attracted. The disciples, after the ascension of Christ and even after the Day of Pentecost, did not abandon the usages of the Jewish religion which did not conflict with the teaching of Jesus. (So also Luther, with conservative tact, did not permit iconoclastic tendencies to direct his reformatory labors.) As before, they observed the Jewish hours of prayer. At the ninth hour, that is, at three o'clock in the afternoon, the time of the evening sacrifice, Peter and John went up into the Temple to pray. At that time the prayers of the believers were wafted upwards as incense sweet in the nostrils of God, and the lifting up of their hands accompanied the bringing of the evening sacrifice. But when the two apostles arrived at the Temple, they were halted by a peculiar circumstance. A certain man, who had been lame from his birth, and could in no way walk, but had to be carried about from one place to another, was daily placed by some friends or acquaintances at that gate of the Temple which was known as "The Beautiful," there to follow his profession as beggar by soliciting alms from the visitors to the Temple. The Temple itself was situated on an eminence overlooking the city, whence the apostles were obliged to go up to visit its courts and halls. "Either the gate that opened out of the Court of the Women to the eastward, or the one between the Court of the Women and the Court of Israel (it is uncertain which one) had been given by one Nicanor and was of fine Corinthian bronze. It was sometimes called 'The Gate Beautiful' and sometimes 'Nicanor's Gate.' It was by this gate, and so near the treasury where people were devoting their money to religion, that Peter and John found the lame man begging." 11) The lame man had probably seen Peter and John often, but this was the occasion

11) Barton, *Archeology and the Bible*, 209. 210.

on which the Lord wanted to show him an act of especial mercy. He looked at the two apostles as they were about to enter, and asked to receive an alms from them.

The miracle of healing: **V. 4. And Peter, fastening his eyes upon him with John, said, Look on us. V. 5. And he gave heed unto them, expecting to receive something of them. V. 6. Then Peter said, Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk. V. 7. And he took him by the right hand and lifted him up; and immediately his feet and ankle-bones received strength. V. 8. And he, leaping up, stood, and walked, and entered with them into the Temple, walking, and leaping, and praising God. V. 9. And all the people saw him walking and praising God. V. 10. And they knew that it was he which sat for alms at the Beautiful Gate of the Temple; and they were filled with wonder and amazement at that which had happened unto him. V. 11. And as the lame man which was healed held Peter and John, all the people ran together unto them in the porch that is called Solomon's, greatly wondering.** The attention of the apostles having thus been directed to the beggar, whom they otherwise might have passed, as they probably had done scores of times, Peter looked at him very intently. His heart was deeply moved at the helpless and pitiable condition of the cripple, and his earnest gaze may have held something of that wonderful sympathy which had so often shone forth from his Master's face. Then he asked the beggar to look at him and John, with the intention of exciting his curiosity and attention, in order that the man might at once be conscious of the source of the miraculous cure. And as the cripple concentrated his attention upon the two apostles, expecting, of course, to receive some gift from them, Peter simply, but impressively, said to him: Silver and gold have I none; these he did not number among his possessions, thus sharing the condition of his Lord and of many servants of the Lord since his time. Worldly belongings were not included in his treasures; but what he did have was sure and lasting. And this Peter was willing to give, to share with the poor man. The power to perform miracles for the sake of establishing the Gospel had been given to the apostles, and Peter proposed to use this power for the healing of this unfortunate cripple. And so his command rang out: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth get up and walk. Peter's power to perform miracles was not absolute, he held it only by the command, in the power, and in the interest of his Lord and Master Jesus, and could use it only in His name. And then Peter took hold of the man's hand, grasping him firmly to give him confidence, and lifted him up, drew him upright. The miracle was performed at once. The man's feet became solid under his weight and his ankles firm; both bones and muscles received not only the strength, but also the ability to use this strength properly. Even while Peter still had hold of his hand, he jumped up; he stood upright first, as if to test the weight on his feet, or to feel the sensation of maintaining an upright position. And then he freely walked about, with no trace of lameness; he even went with Peter and John into the Temple, into the Court of Israel, the place where the men worshiped. And again and again, in the fulness of his joy, he walked about and even leaped, as though he felt constrained to convince himself that he was not dreaming, but that the miracle was a fact. His worshiping on that afternoon was done from the depth of a heart overflowing with thankfulness, wherefore he also praised God, giving all glory and honor to Him, to whom Peter had referred in his command of healing. All this, of course, was not done without attracting notice. Great numbers of people were at this time entering the Temple for the evening sacrifice, and they recognized the man that was walking about and leaping in the joy of his heart as the beggar whom they had often seen at the gate of the Temple. The conclusion in the matter was evident. A miracle had been performed which agitated and shocked them, filled them with wonder and amazement. Their astonishment was mixed with admiration and awe verging almost upon stupor. But there could be no doubt as to the actuality of the happening. For there was the man clinging to the apostles as his benefactors; there were the expressions of his joy and gratitude; there was the fact that he could walk and leap. It was not long, therefore, before all the people that had come into the Temple, forgetting the evening sacrifice and the time of incense, crowded about Peter and John, who had now come out into the beautiful portico or hall known as Solomon's Porch. Note: Every one that has experienced the help of the Lord should give all due praise and thanks to Him and confess His blessings before men. Mark also: Though the gifts of miracles and extraordinary performances of miracles were a special distinction of the apostolic Church, yet the Lord's hand is not shortened for the performing of miracles in the Church. The miracles of His grace, above all, are of such a nature as to provoke the admiration of even the children of the world at times.

The Address of Peter in the Temple.

Acts 3, 12—26.

An emphatic application of the Law: **V. 12. And when Peter saw it, he answered unto the people, Ye men of Israel, why marvel ye at this, or why look ye so earnestly on us, as though by our own power or holiness we had made this man to walk? V. 13. The God of Abraham and of Isaac and of Jacob, the God of our fathers, hath glorified His Son Jesus; whom ye delivered up, and denied Him in the presence of Pilate,**

when he was determined to let Him go. V. 14. But ye denied the Holy One and the Just, and desired a murderer to be granted unto you; v. 15. **and killed the Prince of Life, whom God hath raised from the dead, whereof we are witnesses.** In this account, as well as in that of the previous chapter, one must marvel at the boldness of Peter. He who but a few weeks before had quailed before the scorn of a maid-servant and shamefully denied his Master, here speaks in the presence of a great multitude, in the Temple-hall itself, and throws the accusation of murder into the teeth of the Jews. Peter saw with dismay that the admiration of the people was directed toward John and himself. And so he proceeds at once to correct this false idea. The men of Jerusalem should not be filled with surprise and wonder, nor should they stare at them as though in their own power or on account of their own holiness they had caused the man to walk. Peter denies that he and John possessed either such a physical power as the people imagined, or such a worthy condition and ability of the soul. The admiration of the people should be directed to the real Author of the miracle, whose unworthy agents and servants the apostles but were. And in giving the glory to the heavenly Father and the exalted Christ alone, Peter brings out the guilt of the Jews all the more strongly. The God of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, of whom the Jews were wont boastfully to speak as the God of their fathers, had glorified His Child, His Son, in this miracle, for it was performed in the name, in the power, of Jesus Christ. In glaring contrast to this truth stood the fact that they had delivered Jesus into the power of the Roman governor, and had heaped shame and abuse upon Him. The Jews had blasphemously denied their Lord before Pilate; the heathen judge had been ready to give Him His liberty. The Holy and Just One, the only person that truly merited these attributes in all the wide world, the Jews had denied; they had demanded, with every form of cajolery and threat, that a murderous person be granted to them as a Passover boon, that Barabbas be released to them. The Jews had killed, murdered, Jesus; and He was the Prince of Life, the Author, the Source of life. Over against the entire behavior of the Jews, therefore, stands the manner of God's witnessing for Jesus, whom He has raised from the dead, a fact to which all the apostles could bear most emphatic witness. Thus only the miracle could be explained.

The basis of the present facts in prophecy: V. 16. **And His name, through faith in His name, hath made this man strong whom ye see and know; yea, the faith which is by Him hath given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all.** V. 17. **And now, brethren, I wot that through ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers.** V. 18. **But those things which God before had showed by the mouth of all His prophets, that Christ should suffer, He hath so fulfilled.** Peter had preached the Law to the assembled Jews; he had shown them the heinousness of their transgression against their Lord and Savior; he had forced upon them the conviction that they were most seriously guilty in the sight of God. So far as the miracle was now concerned, over which they were so astounded, the explanation was very simple. It had been performed in the name of Jesus, through His power. On the basis of faith in Jesus, by faith in Jesus, His Word and His promise, Mark 16, 17. 18; John 16, 23, the name of Christ and the power which is contained in His name had strengthened this cripple whom they saw and knew; that was as far as the participation of the apostles in the miracle was concerned. And as for the lame man, the faith which is through Christ, which is given by Him, had granted to the unfortunate man full and perfect health and strength in the presence of this audience, before their very eyes. The explanation then, briefly, was this: The power, the majesty, of the exalted Christ had worked through the apostles, and the sick man had accepted the gift of health by faith.

So much having been established, Peter now brings the consolation of the Gospel to the sinners. He addresses the people present as brethren. He concedes that their horrible crime was committed because of ignorance, and that their rulers may be excused on the same plea. Their guilt was still there, but it was less than if they had committed the crime with full knowledge and deliberate intent. And the counsel and plan of God was thereby carried out. What He had proclaimed in advance through the mouth of all the prophets, namely, that Christ, God's Christ, must suffer in this manner, had been fulfilled in the Passion of Jesus as it had taken place. In this way only was it possible to deliver Israel and the entire sinful world from all sin and guilt. The blood and death of Jesus is actually the ransom for the sins of the whole world. For since He is the Prince, the Source, the Author of life, it is *God's* martyrdom, *God's* blood, *God's* death which is placed in the balance. And God the Father has accepted the sacrifice, He is reconciled to sinners. This fact He has unmistakably confirmed by raising Jesus from the dead and by glorifying and exalting Him to the right hand of His majesty. All this is heavenly comfort for poor sinners.

The way of forgiveness: V. 19. **Repent ye, therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord;** v. 20. **and He shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you;** v. 21. **whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began.** The ignorance of the Jews had been admitted by Peter in extenuation of their guilt,

but it by no means rendered them innocent. He urges them therefore to repent, to have a complete change of mind and heart take place in them, and to be converted, to turn again, to turn about completely to the expunging of their sins. Every one that turns from his sins to Christ, the Savior of sinners, will have his sins taken away, blotted out completely. Faith receives the forgiveness of sins, and where there is forgiveness of sins, there is also life and salvation. And this conversion should be made promptly, without delay, that there may come special seasons of refreshment, in order that times of recreation, of refreshing, of renewing from the face of the Lord may come, and also that the Christ who hath been appointed for you, even Jesus, may be sent. Jesus was not only the Messiah in whom the covenant made with David was fulfilled, but He is also the Lord, the Messianic King, who will return in glory at the last day. When Jesus, whom now, by God's decree, the heavens have received, and who possesses all heavens, will return at the appointed time, then the everlasting seasons of the restitution of all things will begin, of which God has spoken through the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began. The time when this wonderful change may be expected is altogether in the hands of God and may come without warning. It is of great importance, then, that repentance and conversion take place as soon as possible, without delay. Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation, 2 Cor. 6, 2.

A final exhortation: V. 22. **For Moses truly said unto the fathers, A Prophet shall the Lord, your God, raise up unto you of your brethren like unto me; Him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever He shall say unto you.** V. 23. **And it shall come to pass that every soul which will not hear that Prophet shall be destroyed from among the people.** V. 24. **Yea, and all the prophets from Samuel and those that follow after, as many as have spoken, have likewise foretold of these days.** V. 25. **Ye are the children of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham, And in thy Seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed.** V. 26. **Unto you first God, having raised up His Son Jesus, sent Him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities.** That Jesus of Nazareth was indeed the Messiah appointed to the Jews, and that the prophecies were fulfilled in Him, Peter brings out in the last part of his discourse. Moses had made a clear statement in one of his last prophecies to the Israelites in the wilderness, one that did not refer to a mere human prophet, but to One whose words would demand absolute obedience. Moses had spoken of this Prophet that was to come as being like unto himself. As Moses was the mediator between God and the people, both in conveying God's messages to them and in standing between the dead and the living, so Jesus is the true Mediator between God and sinful mankind; as Moses was the deliverer of his people when he led them out of the house of Egypt's bondage, so Jesus had delivered all men from the bondage of sin, death, and damnation. The Prophet, therefore, whom Moses had in mind can be no one else than Jesus Christ. This greatest Prophet of all the Jews must obey, as the prophecy of Moses demanded, Deut. 18, 15. 18. 19, in all His teaching to them. The penalty of disobedience, as Moses had said, was that it would be required of every such defiant person, usually by the sentence of death, Ex. 12, 15. 19; Lev. 17, 4. 9. Peter here gives a transcription and explanation of the words of Moses by saying that every soul that was guilty of wilfully disobeying this great Prophet should be utterly destroyed from the people, should be punished with eternal condemnation. And Moses does not stand alone with his testimony, but his prophecy is seconded and corroborated by that of all the prophets of old, beginning with Samuel, as the founder of the schools of the prophets. As many as spoke prophecies made proclamation of these days, the days of Christ and the Messianic kingdom with all their promises of salvation. All the comfort of these prophecies and promises, as Peter finally assured his hearers, was intended for them, and should be a source of rejoicing to them. The Jews were proud of their descent and of their nation, and in a way they had reasons to be. For they were children of the prophets and of the covenant which God had set forth and established with their fathers. They were heirs, above all, of the promise which God made to Abraham, Gen. 12, 3; 18, 18; 22, 18, to Isaac, Gen. 26, 4, and to Jacob, Gen. 28, 14, in which He stated that all families, kindreds, generations, or peoples should be blessed in their Seed, in their great Descendant, Jesus of Nazareth. In Jesus Christ the blessing of full salvation, of complete redemption, has come to all people in the entire world, not only to the Jews, but also to the Gentiles. But the Jews had been granted the first opportunity of enjoying the blessings of the risen Lord, just as Jesus had spent the time of His ministry exclusively in their midst. God, having raised up His Child, His Son, from the dead, and thus sealed the acceptance of the redemption made by Him, sent Him to bless, to bring the blessings of this redemption to, the Jews, through the work of the apostles. All the blessings and benefits of the Savior would be transmitted to them in and by conversion, in this, that He turns every one from his iniquities. That is the will of God with regard to every sinner, that he turn from all his evil ways and transgressions and accept the blessings of Christ and His atonement.

Summary. *Peter heals a lame man at the gate of the Temple, whereupon the astonishment of the people gives him occasion to speak to them of Jesus Christ, the Messiah, and His atonement.*

CHAPTER 4.

Peter and John before the Council of the Jews. Acts 4, 1—22.

The arrest of the apostles: V. 1. **And as they spake unto the people, the priests, and the captain of the Temple, and the Sadducees came upon them, v. 2. being grieved that they taught the people, and preached through Jesus the resurrection from the dead. V. 3. And they laid hands on them, and put them in hold unto the next day; for it was now eventide. V. 4. Howbeit, many of them which heard the word believed; and the number of the men was about five thousand.** Up to this time the Lord had permitted the growth of the Church to be undisturbed, the work of the apostles going on without interruption and the disciples having plenty of opportunity to be strengthened in the faith. But it was impossible for the old enemies of the Lord to remain idle under the circumstances. The present occasion offered them a welcome chance to interfere and to hinder the activity of the apostles. Peter had not yet finished his discourse to the people, and John also was addressing some part of the multitude, when a body of armed men came rushing across the court. There were the priests, angry, no doubt, because the people had disregarded the evening sacrifice and the hour of incense offering in their astonishment over the healing of the lame man. There was the captain of the Temple, "the man of the Temple-mount," who had charge of the priests and Levites that guarded the Temple and its surroundings, acting also as police for the grounds. At night the number of guards for the twenty-one outer and three inner stations amounted to 240 Levites and 30 priests.[12] The excuse for his officiousness probably was that the peace of the Temple was being disturbed by the concourse. And there were finally, and principally, the Sadducees, the members of the high-priestly party, who felt that their grievance was especially hard to bear. For the whole brunt of Peter's preaching was in opposition to the Sadducees' denial of the resurrection of the dead; all the discourses of the apostles were based upon that one fact, that Jesus was raised from the dead, and that this fact proved His Messiahship. Jesus had, on one occasion, indeed, maintained the resurrection of the dead against the error of the Sadducees, Matt. 22, 23—33, but they had hardened their hearts against the truth and were determined not to tolerate its teaching. The confession of the resurrection of the dead upon the basis of Christ's resurrection is a source of mockery and enmity toward the Christians to this day. The Jewish officials knew that the success of their plan depended upon quick action. So they took time for neither expostulation nor accusation; they simply laid forcible hands upon the two apostles, arrested them, and put them into a place of custody for the night, since they intended to arraign them in the morning. In spite of this action of the rulers, however, the preaching of Peter and John was not without result. For of the people in the audience that heard the Word there were many in whose heart faith was kindled, that believed in the Lord proclaimed to them. And thus the number of believers came to be, the men only being counted, after the Oriental custom, a total of about five thousand. With the power of the Spirit in the Word influencing the hearts, the Church expanded in spite of threatening danger.

The Sanhedrin is convened: V. 5. **And it came to pass on the morrow that their rulers, and elders, and scribes, v. 6. and Annas, the high priest, and Caiaphas, and John, and Alexander, and as many as were of the kindred of the high priest, were gathered together at Jerusalem. V. 7. And when they had set them in the midst, they asked, By what power or by what name have ye done this?** The next morning excitement ran high in official circles at Jerusalem; for were they not about to stamp out the hated sect that was gaining adherents with such alarming rapidity in their midst? So it was a very formal and very full session of the Sanhedrin which came together as soon as they could all be notified; for the text seems to indicate that some lived outside of the city. There were the rulers and the elders and the scribes, that is, the most prominent and influential members of the priesthood, chiefly Sadducees; those whose age and learning set them apart from the rest; and the professional lawyers, who generally belonged to the Pharisees. But outranking them all were the members of the high-priestly family: Annas, although retired by the Romans, yet retaining many of the rights and obligations of the office; Caiaphas, his son-in-law, and the high priest actually in charge; John, Alexander, and whoever else belonged to the relatives of the high priest. "Annas, whom Luke both here and in his former narrative calls high priest, was the lawful high priest, but he had been deposed by Valerius Gratus, the predecessor of Pilate, and Caiaphas, his son-in-law, had been, by the same unlawful procedure, put in his place, so that, while the latter was holding the office, the other was lawfully entitled to it, and was recognized as high priest by the people."[13] After the council had been formally opened, with its members seated in a semicircle, the two apostles were placed in the midst before them. It seems from verse 14 that the former cripple, not willing that his benefactors should be accused or

12) Edersheim, *The Temple*, 147. 148.

13) McGarvey, *New Commentary on Acts*, 69.

made to suffer without his presence and sympathy, also appeared and took his position beside them. The accused were now formally asked to give an account of their action: By what power and in what name have you done this? The miracle itself could not be denied. What the supercilious and somewhat pointed question intended to bring out was what kind of power and authority the apostles were assuming; in virtue of what name they dared to perform such deeds. It appears that the court wanted to fasten the accusation of divination or sorcery upon the apostles. Cp. Deut. 13. Incidentally, the Jewish leaders may have hoped that Peter and John would speak unguarded words in answering the purposely indefinite question, and thus furnish real ground for a trial.

Peter's speech of defense: V. 8. **Then Peter, filled with the Holy Ghost, said unto them, Ye rulers of the people and elders of Israel,** v. 9. **if we this day be examined of the good deed done to the impotent man, by what means he is made whole,** v. 10. **be it known unto you all and to all the people of Israel that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by Him doth this man stand here before you whole.** V. 11. **This is the Stone which was set at naught of you builders, which is become the Head of the corner.** V. 12. **Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved.** In the case of Peter it was now fulfilled what Jesus had promised, Luke 12, 12. He was filled with the Holy Ghost; the Holy Ghost took charge of his mind and his mouth and directed the action of both. The question of the council had been with reference to the name and authority by which the apostles were acting. Solemnly, emphatically, and boldly addressing them as rulers of the people and elders, Peter makes a confession of his faith and of his ministry. He does not overlook the sneering "you" of the question, but states: If, as is the case, we, upon whom you heap mockery, are examined on account, about, the good deed shown to the sick man. Note the fine bit of oratorical irony in the statement. It reproves the rulers of the Jews for making a crime of acts of kindness and beneficence. Since the members of the council wanted to know in what manner, by what means, or "in whom" this man had been thoroughly healed, it should be known, not only to them all, but also to the entire nation of Israel, that this man was standing, was presented, before them in full health in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom they had crucified, but whom God had raised from the dead. This was the answer of Peter, a statement which needed no proof; for the judges could not deny that the miracle had actually been performed with the man standing before them. And as for refuting the claim of Peter as to the manner of the miracle, they could not with any degree of probability adduce any other power or name through which such a deed might have been done. And the candidness of Peter is equaled only by his boldness. For he deliberately pushes his advantage farther by holding before the eyes of his judges the passage Ps. 118, 22, which Jesus, but a short time before, had quoted to a committee of the same Sanhedrin, Matt. 21, 42; Mark 12, 10; Luke 21, 17. The rulers of the Jews were like men that tried to build a house, and foolishly rejected the only stone which was available for the corner of the foundation upon which the whole building was to rest. Jesus was the Stone ordained by God as the foundation of His Church. But the Jews had rejected Christ, and thus spoken the judgment upon themselves. In spite of all that Jesus was and will remain the Corner-stone, the very Foundation of the holy temple which He is rearing to Himself. And not only that, but, as Peter joyfully cries out: In none other is there salvation, for there is also none other name under heaven that is given among men in which we must be saved. The salvation earned by Jesus is complete, and it is the only salvation to be found anywhere. His name, the Word of redemption, is given, is proclaimed in the midst of men, in all the world, and whoever will be saved must turn to this one Source and Author of everlasting life. "On the name of Christ I cannot believe in any other way but that I hear the merit of Christ preached and accept this. Therefore by believing on the name of Christ and not by trust in our works we are saved. For the word 'name' in this place means the reason by which and on account of which salvation comes. Therefore, to glorify and confess the name of Christ is as much as trusting in Him who alone is and is called Christ, as the cause of my salvation and my treasure, by which I am saved." 14)

The consultation of the Sanhedrin: V. 13. **Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marveled; and they took knowledge of them that they had been with Jesus.** V. 14. **And beholding the man which was healed standing with them, they could say nothing against it.** V. 15. **But when they had commanded them to go aside out of the council, they conferred among themselves,** v. 16. **saying, What shall we do to these men? For that indeed a notable miracle hath been done by them is manifest to all them that dwell in Jerusalem; and we cannot deny it.** V. 17. **But that it spread no further among the people, let us straitly threaten them that they speak henceforth to no man in this name.** The

14) *Apologia.* Mueller, 105.

Jewish rulers had expected Peter and John to show fear or timidity in their presence, to be overawed by the dignity and learning of the members of the council. Instead of that, however, there was in their bearing a freedom and confidence and in the speech of Peter a fearless candor which compelled respect on their part. The longer they contemplated the manner of the men, the more this conviction was forced upon them. And this impression was heightened by the fact that the judges had perceived, either by their dress or by their dialect, that the two men before them were really unlearned and ignorant men, that they not only were not versed in the Law and in all the Jewish learning, but actually had not been able to write, were altogether illiterate. And there was still another point which the members of the council now noted, namely, that these men had belonged to the small company of Christ's followers. This recognition came to them at this point, since they had seen Peter and John both as attendants of Jesus, and since John was a personal acquaintance of Caiaphas, John 18, 15. 18. No wonder that all these facts, gradually absorbing the consciousness of the judges, caused them to sit in embarrassed silence. For as far as the miracle was concerned, any attempt at denial would have been worse than futile, since the former cripple was there before their eyes, standing upright and sound upon his feet. The evidence of the miracle spoke no less forcibly than the apostles themselves. And so the rulers had nothing to say. Finally the silence was broken by the proposal, and the command based upon it, that the men leave the council-chamber for some time, being undoubtedly taken out under guard. Now the judges felt free to consider the matter; they exchanged their thoughts and opinions of the case. The gist of the discussion is given by Luke. There was no denying that a very evident miracle had been performed, which had also come to the knowledge of all the people of Jerusalem. To attempt a denial of these facts would have been worse than useless, it would have been foolishness of the most extreme type. And yet some one proposed an effort to stop the spread of the truth, and the proposal was eagerly made a resolution. In order that the message and the movement which accompanied it might spread no farther and be dispersed among the common people, like seed that promised a bountiful crop, they resolved earnestly to threaten the apostles that they speak no more about the name of Jesus, making Him and His Gospel the subject of their discourses. With none of the people, to not a single individual, should they speak about the name revered by them above all other names. Note: The unbelieving children of this world cannot deny that the power of God is mighty in the teaching and in the lives of the Christians. And yet they remain hostile to the name of Christ and make every effort to suppress the proclamation of the Gospel. Thus the unbelievers, with their unbelief and with their enmity toward Christ, act in direct opposition to their own conscience and better knowledge.

The resolution announced to Peter and John: V. 18. **And they called them, and commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus.** V. 19. **But Peter and John answered and said unto them, Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye.** V. 20. **For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard.** V. 21. **So when they had further threatened them, they let them go, finding nothing how they might punish them, because of the people; for all men glorified God for that which was done.** V. 22. **For the man was above forty years old on whom this miracle of healing was showed.** Peter and John were now called back into the meeting of the council, and the resolution was made known to them in its strictest interpretation. They were in no way to utter a word nor to teach about the name of Jesus. They should not, even in any private conversation, much less before a public assembly, speak or teach a single thing concerning Jesus. It was a summary and comprehensive prohibition. But both Peter and John, disregarding their own safety as well as even the semblance of expediency, unhesitatingly avowed their purpose to disregard the order of the Sanhedrin. And in stating this, they modestly, but firmly, appealed to the consciences of the judges. Whether it be in accordance with right and justice before God to obey them rather than God they should judge for themselves. Acting as before God, and following the dictates of eternal truth and justice, we dare not be silent. It cannot be right to obey man contrary to the will and command of God. It is impossible for us not to speak that which we have seen and heard. All things are possible to the believers in Christ, but it is impossible for them to be silent where the Word and honor of God and their Lord Jesus Christ are concerned. For silence in that case is equivalent to denial, and denial means to fall from grace. So the defiant refusal was stated before the Sanhedrin, whose members found themselves unable to react. They were obliged to be content with another, with an additional, serious threat as to what would happen if they dared to disobey. So this was the sad climax of the Sanhedrin's vengeful effort. They were obliged to dismiss the two apostles; there was no case, no cause why they might punish them. And their fear of the people was another factor which cautioned prudence. For all men were full of praise toward God over the miracle that had been performed, a deed all the more noteworthy since the former cripple had not only been lame from his birth, but was more than forty years old at the time he was healed. Privately and

secretly, of course, the members of the council were nursing their resentment, firmly resolved to make use of the first opportunity that offered to strike a decisive blow. Note: The true Christians are filled with missionary zeal wherever they go and whatever they undertake. And when men attempt to hinder them, when the government prohibits the preaching of the Gospel, they refuse to accede to the will of men and are obedient to God, who has commanded them to confess Christ, to preach the Gospel.

The Prayer and the Further Establishment of the Congregation. Acts 4, 23—37.

The report of the apostles and the prayer: V. 23. **And being let go, they went to their own company, and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said unto them.** V. 24. **And when they heard that, they lifted up their voice to God with one accord and said, Lord, Thou art God, which hast made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all that in them is;** v. 25. **who by the mouth of Thy servant David hast said, Why did the heathen rage, and the people imagine vain things?** V. 26. **The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord and against His Christ.** V. 27. **For of a truth, against Thy holy Child Jesus, whom Thou hast anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, were gathered together** v. 28. **for to do whatsoever Thy hand and Thy counsel determined before to be done.** By the power of the Spirit's testimony through the mouth of the apostles the enemies had been vanquished. The two disciples were discharged for want of condemnatory matter against them. They came to their own, to their fellow-disciples, who were assembled according to their custom. To these members of the Christian community they made a report of all that the high priests and elders, the members of the Sanhedrin, had said to them. And the result was a spontaneous outburst of prayer on the part of the entire assembly, in the form of a hymn clothed in language from the Psalms. The vigorous spiritual life of the early Christians manifested itself here, and the Spirit Himself taught them the words of their powerful prayer. They addressed their prayer to the almighty Master of the universe, to Him that had made heaven and earth and the sea and all creatures that inhabit them, before whom nothing is impossible, who holds the fortunes of the entire world in the hollow of His hand, and directs them to suit His purposes. It was this God who had inspired David to pen the words of the Second Psalm, as we here learn. It was He that had asked the question through His servant David: For what reason do the nations engage in tumultuous uprisings, and the people meditate things that are vain and foolish? The haughtiness and insolence of all men by nature is equaled only by the vanity, the emptiness, of their aspirations. Here was evidence enough for the truth of the prophecy. The kings of the earth and the rulers had gathered themselves together against the Lord and against His Christ. No matter whether they were otherwise at bitter enmity toward each other, they forgot all their differences when a concerted move was planned against the Word and work of God and Christ. Assuredly, as the evidence before the eyes of all men showed plainly, in this very city they were banding together against the holy Child of God, His Son Jesus: Herod and Pontius Pilate, the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, — they were all united against God's Anointed One. They would, of course, be able to carry out and succeed in doing only that which the hand of the Lord and His counsel had seen in advance and known that it would be done. God was still controlling the destinies of nations as well as of individuals. That was the situation. The enmity was there; it was directed against the Lord and His Christ; the believers knew that nothing could happen without the foreknowledge and permission of God. Note that there is no indication of a vindictive or resentful spirit in the prayer, but only a complete trust in the Lord.

The conclusion of the prayer and its answer: V. 29. **And now, Lord, behold their threatenings, and grant unto Thy servants that with all boldness they may speak Thy Word,** v. 30. **by stretching forth Thine hand to heal; and that signs and wonders may be done by the name of Thy holy Child Jesus.** V. 31. **And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the Word of God with boldness.** The congregation now came to its special petition. The threatenings of the enemies were being concentrated upon their small flock; the storm seemed about to break over them. Of this fact the Lord should take notice, not for the purpose of subduing or removing the trial of faith, if His wisdom should think it best to have the temptations come, but to give to them, His servants, the necessary strength to speak and proclaim His Word with all boldness, without fear or favor. He should, to this end, support the proclamation of His truth by stretching forth His almighty arm and confirming it with miracles of healing, and by showing forth signs and wonders, by having them performed through the name and in the power of His holy Child, His Son Jesus. The name of that very Man whom the Jews despised and crucified was to be magnified among them by these manifestations of His power. These were the two gifts which the congregation and all its members needed at that time: first, the power and the willingness to proclaim the Word with courage and joy, and secondly,

the ability to help and to heal, as an evidence that the omnipotent God and the power of the exalted Christ was with them. While they were still engaged in this prayer, the Lord gave evidence of having heard them. For the place where they were assembled was moved, was agitated, which signified the divine presence. And, in addition, they were all filled with the Holy Ghost; there was a special demonstration of His power, enabling them to speak and proclaim the Word with all boldness and power. This was henceforth a continuous action of the disciples; without the divine power in them the growth of the Church in the face of such opposition could not be explained. Note: The Church of the Lord has ever, amid the raging and threatening of its enemies, sought and found refuge with the almighty God. For God always hears the crying of His harassed children, and grants them power and boldness to proclaim the Gospel in the midst of His enemies.

The unity and charity of the Church: V. 32. **And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul; neither said any of them that aught of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common.** V. 33. **And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus; and great grace was upon them all.** V. 34. **Neither was there any among them that lacked; for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold,** v. 35. **and laid them down at the apostles' feet; and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need.** V. 36. **And Joses, who by the apostles was surnamed Barnabas, (which is, being interpreted, The son of consolation,) a Levite, and of the country of Cyprus,** v. 37. **having land, sold it, and brought the money, and laid it at the apostles' feet.** There was now a multitude of believers, a congregation of some five thousand men, not counting women and children. And of them all Luke records the highest praise which can be given to a Christian congregation. They were believers, since they adhered closely to the doctrine of the apostles, that is, the teaching of Christ. Because of this faith they were one heart and soul; there was perfect harmony in both affection and thought; there was true unity of spirit. It may seem remarkable that people from such a variety of social relations and conditions could be so thoroughly agreed and so completely harmonious, but such is the power of faith in Jesus. And there was another manifestation of the faith in, and the love toward, their Lord to be noted, namely, an unselfishness which prompted them to take care of their neighbor's need with the same love and care as their own. The goods of every member were at the disposal of the other members, as they had need of assistance. No one claimed the right of absolute possession. This was not the expression of fantastic and illusory socialistic theories or of an absolute communism, but a spontaneous manifestation of Christian love. This spirit was kept alive and strengthened by the fact that the apostles with great power gave witness of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. It was the spirit, the love, of the risen Christ that lived in the disciples, that actuated them and prompted them to give such evidence of true and unselfish love. It was the result of their acceptance of the resurrected Lord by faith that brought great grace upon them all, favor with God in the consciousness of His mercy, and favor with men on account of the unheard-of unselfishness and pure charity that was practised by them. Luke repeats that there was no need for any one of them to be in want or to suffer, for the richer members, those that possessed lands or houses, freely and without any urging sold them and brought the proceeds of the sale to the apostles, in order that distribution might be made to all such as were in need. The congregation at this time voluntarily yielded to the teachers the right to take charge of these moneys and supervise their proper distribution. Of the well-to-do disciples, the example of one is recorded as especially noteworthy. This was the case of one Joseph, whom the apostles had surnamed Barnabas (the son of consolation). He was a Jew and had been a Levite before his conversion. He hailed from the island of Cyprus, where he was the owner of a field. The Levites had originally not been permitted to hold possessions in land, Num. 18, 20; Deut. 10, 9, but since the Babylonian exile the distribution of land and the maintenance of the Levites was no longer so strictly observed according to the Mosaic Law, Neh. 13, 10—14. Besides, they could hold land by purchase or inheritance, Jer. 32, 7—12. Barnabas, filled with love for his needy brethren, sold his land and brought the money to the apostles, just as most of his fellow-Christians did. Note: The enmity of the world does not result to the detriment of the Church. In the midst of cross and tribulation, of hardships and difficulties, the Church is established, and faith and love are rendered strong. When the world begins to rage and to threaten, the true Christians cling all the more firmly to the Word, and this Word shows its power, binding their hearts together ever more firmly.

Summary. *Peter and John, arraigned before the Sanhedrin, defend themselves and their cause to the confusion of their judges; they report the matter to the congregation, which lays the threatening enmity before God in prayer, and is more soundly established in faith and love.*

CHAPTER 5.

Ananias and Sapphira. Acts 5, 1—11.

The sin and death of Ananias: **V. 1. But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira, his wife, sold a possession, v. 2. and kept back part of the price, his wife also being privy to it, and brought a certain part, and laid it at the apostles' feet. V. 3. But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back part of the price of the land? V. 4. Whiles it remained, was it not thine own? And after it was sold, was it not in thine own power? Why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart? Thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God. V. 5. And Ananias, hearing these words, fell down, and gave up the ghost; and great fear came on all them that heard these things. V. 6. And the young men arose, wound him up, and carried him out, and buried him.** Luke had just narrated an instance of true, charitable selflessness in the conduct of Barnabas of Cyprus. Unfortunately, however, the appreciation and praise accorded to people that have shown real benevolence often prompts hypocrites to make a pretense and show of great love, in order that they may also be given words that sound pleasant to their itching ears. Into the paradise of the early Church there entered the serpent of selfishness and corruption. Luke presents no reflections and affixes no moral, adhering to his practise of simply narrating the facts of history. There was a certain man, a member of the congregation at Jerusalem, by the name of Ananias ("to whom Jehovah has been gracious"). The name of his wife, who also belonged to those that professed Christianity, was Sapphira (sapphire, "the beautiful"). To these two belonged a possession, some property, very likely a piece of improved real estate of some value. Now Ananias as well as his wife were eager to be accounted benefactors of their poorer brethren, and so they sold their property, probably with some ostentation. But their interest in the poor was only sham, and for the good will of God they cared nothing. They set apart, they appropriated for their own benefit, a certain part of the proceeds of the sale. It is expressly stated that Sapphira was fully aware of this arrangement, that it was done with her full knowledge and consent; she was just as guilty as her husband. "If we attempt to analyze the motive of the guilty pair, we shall find that their act was a compromise between two unholy desires. The desire to have the praise of men, such as had been bestowed upon Barnabas and some others, prompted the sale and the gift, while the love of money, which still held too strong a hold on them, prompted the retention of a part while they were pretending to give all." 15) Their course having been fully decided upon, Ananias took the sum of money which they decided should serve to establish their fame as dispensers of charity, brought it to the meeting-place of the apostles and the congregation, and deposited it in the customary place. The act which the guilty pair was committing was not simply their sin as individuals, but placed the whole church into great danger. For if others should learn of this subterfuge, they would be apt to practise the same hypocrisy. But if integrity and truth should disappear in the congregation, the Church of Christ would lose her brightest ornaments, and pharisaic hypocrisy would be substituted for Christian holiness. "It was, therefore, of vital importance to the Church that the introduction of an evil of such magnitude should meet with an immediate and effectual resistance." Accordingly, Peter put the heart-searching question to Ananias: How is it that Satan has filled thy heart to lie to the Holy Ghost? As the devil is the author of every sin and transgression, so he here also gave the idea of wickedness and deceit into the heart of Ananias. For in pretending a benevolence which he was far from feeling, the man had lied, not so much to men, to Peter, the apostles, and the congregation, but to the Holy Ghost, who spoke and acted through the apostles, who lived and moved in the Christian congregation. He had tempted the Spirit of God, who tests heart and mind, who, as true God, knows the innermost thoughts of every man's heart. And Peter very properly reminded Ananias that the property had been his to keep, if he so chose; there was no compulsory communism in the congregation. And if he had chosen to sell his property and to keep all the money, it was entirely in his own power. It would even have been strictly his own business if he had frankly stated that he was bringing only a part of the proceeds, since he intended to use the rest himself. But his heart had been set upon getting credit for charity and benevolence which he did not possess. "The act of selling their possession for the ostensible purpose of bringing it into the common stock left them no further control over it nor property in it; and their pretense that the money which they brought was the whole produce of the sale was a direct lie in itself, and an attempt to deceive the Holy Spirit, under whose influence they pretended to act. This constituted the iniquity of their sin." 16) Note: The fact that Satan had filled the heart of Ananias, and that he had conceived this thing in his own heart, are placed on a level. The fact that Ananias had yielded to the devil's persuasion and temptation put the responsibility, the blame, upon him. The same holds true of every sinner in every sin which he commits, especially if it is done with such deliberate intent as in this case. Mark also: In lying to the Holy Ghost, Ananias had lied to God Himself, for the Holy

15) McGarvey, *New Commentary on Acts*, 82. 83.

16) Clarke, *Commentary*, 5, 715.

Spirit is true God with the Father and the Son. Deceit and hypocrisy of every kind is open before His omniscience, as every one that is guilty of these sins will find out to his great sorrow sooner or later. The sin of Ananias received its condemnation at once, and a punishment which is intended to be a warning for all times. For no sooner had Peter finished his earnest rebuke, no sooner had the guilty man heard these words, than he fell down and breathed forth his soul; he died at once, struck by the wrath of the Holy Ghost. The execution was so obviously an act of God that a great fear fell upon all those that saw the punishment and heard the words by which it was accompanied. When God speaks, the heart of sinful man is filled with awe. And the young men of the congregation, not a special class or separate body, but the younger members of the audience, arose from their places. There was no time either for a lamentation or for an elaborate funeral ceremony, had the people present been so inclined; there was no weeping or delay. Wrapping the dead man up in his own mantle, the young men carried him out and buried him. Such is the end of those that abuse the grace of the Lord. Be not deceived, God is not mocked.

The death of Sapphira: V. 7. **And it was about the space of three hours after, when his wife, not knowing what was done, came in.** V. 8. **And Peter answered unto her, Tell me whether ye sold the land for so much. And she said, Yea, for so much.** V. 9. **Then Peter said unto her, How is it that ye have agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord? Behold, the feet of them which have buried thy husband are at the door, and shall carry thee out.** V. 10. **Then fell she down straightway at his feet, and yielded up the ghost. And the young men came in, and found her dead, and, carrying her forth, buried her by her husband.** V. 11. **And great fear came upon all the Church, and upon as many as heard these things.** Whether the information concerning the death of her husband had been withheld from Sapphira by the command of Peter, or whether the awe of the incident they had witnessed kept the members from spreading the story, is immaterial. After an interval of about three hours, Sapphira, who may have become concerned over the long absence of Ananias, came to the meeting-place of the congregation. She was fully prepared to keep her agreement with her husband relative to the money, not knowing that his fate had been sealed hours before. When Peter, therefore, put the question to her whether for just that sum which was still lying there they had sold their property, she unhesitatingly replied: Yes, for just so much. Peter's question had been a last appeal to her conscience, a last admonition to tell the truth and give all glory to God. But she disregarded the admonition, persevered in her sin, and seconded the base lie of her husband. It was a wilful persistence in sin, in hypocrisy. Note the dramatic intensity of the narrative. Peter now, in the name of God, as a prophet of the Lord, pronounced the judgment upon her. For what reason, to what end, did you agree to tempt the Spirit of God, to see whether it would be possible to deceive Him as well as His Church? The feet of those that carried out thy husband are at the door, and will carry thee out. And no sooner had Peter uttered the Lord's judgment than Sapphira fell down, just as her husband had before her, and also breathed her last. And the young men coming in, found her dead, and buried her beside her husband, to be joined with him in death as she had been in life. That was a terrible, but just judgment which the Lord here executed in the midst of the first congregation. By this act God declared to the Church of all times that the hypocrites are an abomination in His sight. It is but seldom in our days that the Lord makes known His avenging power in the same manner as here, but His hand is not shortened even to-day when His honor is at stake. Note: There is a repetition of the sin of Ananias and Sapphira in modern church-life, also in connection with the Lord's treasury, namely, when members of congregations make exaggerated statements of the amounts they are giving or understate their income, in order to make their contribution for the Kingdom stand out above that of others. The result of this story should rather be, as it was in those days, that a great fear comes upon the people, both upon those that are members of the Church and those that are still outside, but hear of this manifestation of God's power. The same God that sat in judgment upon Ananias and Sapphira will, in His own way and at the time appointed by Him, not fail to visit the sins upon those that follow the example of these two hypocrites.

The Prosperity of the Church.

Acts 5, 12—16.

V. 12. **And by the hands of the apostles were many signs and wonders wrought among the people, (and they were all with one accord in Solomon's Porch.** V. 13. **And of the rest durst no man join himself to them; but the people magnified them.** V. 14. **And believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women,)** v. 15. **insomuch that they brought forth the sick into the streets, and laid them on beds and couches, that at the least the shadow of Peter passing by might overshadow some of them.** V. 16. **There came also a multitude out of the cities round about unto Jerusalem, bringing sick folks, and them which were vexed with unclean spirits; and they were healed, every one.** The activity of the apostles, and of the congregation with them, manifested itself in two ways, by the preaching of the Word and

by the performing of miracles. The prestige of the apostles was naturally increased greatly by the obvious fact that the Lord was with them in all their doing. The congregation, therefore, at least for some time, was unhindered in its public assemblies which were held in the beautiful portico on the east side of the Temple, known as Solomon's Porch. In these public meetings the main object was to give testimony of the Gospel, to gain new adherents for the Lord. There was great unanimity both in meeting and in testifying at these regular assemblies. Incidentally, the authority of the apostles was now so great that no one ventured upon familiar intercourse with them. All the people that in any way came into contact with the congregation kept a respectful distance from the men in whom the Spirit of God lived with such manifestations of power; and they all esteemed them very highly. The veneration which they felt for God was in a measure transferred to these His servants and instruments and to the whole congregation. The natural result was that believers were added to the Lord, joined the ranks of those that put their trust in Jesus as their Savior, a multitude of both men and women; there was a steady growth in membership. Note the reference to woman disciples, which is characteristic of Luke's writings; cp. Luke 8, 2. 3. It was God that wrought faith in all their hearts, and thus added them to the congregation. The apostles' activity in preaching was supplemented by their activity in performing miracles, according to the measure of the power given to them in those days for the sake of magnifying the omnipotence of God. By their hands there were many signs and wonders performed, acts against the course of nature that incidentally expressed and emphasized God's power. So great did the fame of the apostles become in this respect that the people even carried out their sick people to the open streets, all along the way on both sides, placing them on couches and beds, on pallets and litters. If but the shadow of Peter, as he came by, might fall upon them, they trusted that the sick would be made whole. So eager were the people that the apostles, who generally addressed the sick, prayed, and used imposition of hands, could not reach all those that were brought to them, as fast as the anxiety of their friends might wish. And the number was not confined to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, but a multitude of people came from the towns near by, bringing both such as were afflicted with ordinary diseases, and such as were vexed with unclean spirits; and they all were healed, no matter whether their illness had the one form or the other. God gave such an exhibition of His power and glory in the work of the disciples as never before in the history of the world, since His object was the firm establishment of His Church. Note: If transgressions occur in a Christian congregation, it may harm the good name and hinder the growth of the Church. But here the sudden punishment of the Lord and the behavior of the disciples in burying the guilty ones without lamentation and funeral ceremony combined to produce the opposite effect. If the Christians in this way at all times check offenses and put out of their midst those whose open transgressions are causing offense, then the congregation will not be harmed. The judgment of the congregation upon incorrigible open sinners makes a good impression upon those that are without, and may tend to influence some of them in favor of the Church and the Word of the Lord.

The Imprisonment, Deliverance, and Defense of the Apostles. Acts 5, 17—42.

Arrest and deliverance: V. 17. **Then the high priest rose up, and all they that were with him, (which is the sect of the Sadducees,) and were filled with indignation,** v. 18. **and laid their hands on the apostles, and put them in the common prison.** V. 19. **But the angel of the Lord by night opened the prison-doors, and brought them forth, and said,** v. 20. **Go, stand and speak in the Temple to the people all the words of this life.** V. 21a. **And when they heard that, they entered into the Temple early in the morning and taught.** One storm had been safely weathered, chap. 4, but a second one was coming on which would prove a little severer than the previous one. The constant growth of the congregation and the enthusiastic praise which was given to the apostles on all sides was too much for the rulers of the Jews, especially for the Sadducees with their denial of the resurrection. To them it was an abomination that the entire preaching of the Gospel was based upon the miraculous rising of Jesus from the dead. And so their party, with the high priest at its head, who most likely also belonged to this school or party, made another formal descent upon the portico of Solomon. They were not merely filled with indignation because the disciples dared to continue their preaching in the name of Jesus, but they were literally filled with angry jealousy on account of the fact that the apostles were gaining in popular favor, that the people were giving them great awe and reverence. So these leaders laid angry, forcible hands upon the apostles and placed them into the public prison with the idea of publicly defaming and degrading them. But their triumph was of short duration. For during that very night an angel of the Lord, probably one of the highest order, like Gabriel, not only opened the doors of the Temple, but also led them forth and gave them the command to go to the Temple, to stand before the people, and to speak all the words of this life, to preach the Gospel of eternal salvation. Far from being discouraged by the treatment accorded them, the apostles were to proclaim the message entrusted to them not only boldly, but also in the most public spot in all

Jerusalem. He who Himself is the Resurrection and the Life wanted the Word of this life to extend its influence not only in Jerusalem, but throughout Judea and to the end of the world. So about the time of daybreak, just as soon as the Temple-doors were opened for the bringing of the morning sacrifice, the apostles went to the Temple and resumed their teaching. The more the Word of God extends its power, the more the wrath of the world and of the prince of this world is enkindled. Many a disciple of Christ has been thrown into prison on account of the name which he believed in and confessed. But the Lord was with them and helped them according to His promise. And never in the history of the Church have the true confessors permitted themselves to be deterred, either by persecution or by imprisonment, from preaching the Word which God entrusted to them.

The Sadducees receive a surprise: V. 21b. **But the high priest came, and they that were with him, and called the Council together, and all the senate of the children of Israel, and sent to the prison to have them brought. V. 22. But when the officers came and found them not in the prison, they returned and told, v. 23. saying, The prison, truly, found we shut with all safety, and the keepers standing without before the doors; but when we had opened, we found no man within. V. 24. Now when the high priest and the captain of the Temple and the chief priests heard these things, they doubted of them whereunto this would grow. V. 25. Then came one and told them, saying, Behold, the men whom ye put in prison are standing in the Temple and teaching the people.** The next morning the high priest was stirring betimes. Having come to the place where the Sadducees met, he and his henchmen called a meeting, not only of the entire Sanhedrin, the highest ecclesiastical court of the Jews, but also the presbytery of the children of Israel, the old and experienced teachers of the nation that were no members of the Council.[17] But when they now, after all this formal and impressive introduction, sent servants over to the prison to get the prisoners, the latter were not in evidence. The servants returned with the information that they had found the prison locked up and made secure in approved fashion, that the guards had been occupying their accustomed places, but when they had opened the doors, there had been no prisoners. The angel of the Lord had therefore not only smitten the keepers of the prison with temporary blindness, but he had also relocked the doors to remove all evidence of the miraculous deliverance of the apostles. This message produced a great deal of consternation in the Sanhedrin. And it perplexed not only the members of the Council themselves, but also the "man of the Temple-mount," the chief of the Temple police. Clearly the hand of God had here intervened, as they admitted indirectly in their perplexity, not knowing whereunto this might grow, where it would all end at the present rate of progress. Meanwhile a man came and announced to them that the men whom they had thrown into prison were standing in the Temple, openly and boldly engaged in teaching the people. Thus many an enemy of the Lord and His Word has found himself baffled by the manner in which the Lord protects them that are His, and takes care of His own interests. It is a good plan, a safe plan, to put all trust in Him.

The arraignment of the apostles: V. 26. **Then went the captain with the officers, and brought them without violence; for they feared the people, lest they should have been stoned. V. 27. And when they had brought them, they set them before the Council; and the high priest asked them, v. 28. saying, Did not we straitly command you that ye should not teach in this name? And, behold, ye have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this Man's blood upon us.** The chief of the Temple police acted upon the information which had been given to the Sanhedrin. Leaving the council-chamber, probably the Hall of Polished Stones, he went over with the servants to get the apostles. But instead of making it appear at all like an arrest, the chief was very careful to escort the apostles most carefully and civilly. Not for a moment did he make use of force, for the whole band had a wholesome respect for, and fear of, the temper of the people, lest they should be stoned. It was not only that the apostles were held in high esteem by the people, but it had undoubtedly appeared by this time in what manner they had been liberated from prison. It was doubtless the mass of people that they feared, since the members of the congregation would hardly have become guilty of any act of violence. The apostles, on their part, accompanied the officers without hesitation or fear, trusting simply in the Lord. And so the servants brought them into the presence of the judges, who sat in the accustomed semicircle, while the accused stood before them. The high priest now put the question to them, not without some heat, whether the Council had not very earnestly and emphatically recommended to them and urged upon them not to teach in this name. Note that the enemy of Christ will not even mention the hated name. He charges them with disobedience to the Sanhedrin and complains that they have filled all Jerusalem with their doctrine. So much the high priest had to concede, that the success of the new teaching was marvelous. But his main charge is that they are attempting to bring upon the

17) Some commentators believe that the double expression used by Luke refers to the Sanhedrin alone, and denotes the importance of the occasion. Cp. Moulton and Milligan. *Vocabulary*, and Grimm-Thayer, *sub voce*.

Jewish nation and their leaders the blood of Jesus. There seems to be here a reference to the terrible curse which the Jewish rulers had spoken on the day of the Lord's death, when they cried out: His blood be upon us and upon our children! Matt. 27, 25. The resurrection of Jesus being established and therefore His eternal Sonship, it would naturally follow that those who condemned Him were murderers, having shed innocent blood. They must either let the people make this accusation, or they must suppress every witness of the resurrection with ruthless violence. Should the common people once be stirred up against the murderers of the innocent Jesus, the chances are that the latter would pay very quickly for their crime, blood for blood and life for life. Instead of abandoning the way of hypocrisy and crime, therefore, the Jewish leaders decided to choose the bad alternative of plunging in still more deeply. Note: If a person has been given reasonable proofs of having been guilty and persists in his course, stifles the voice of his conscience, and adds additional crimes to the list already charged against him, he is hardening his heart and placing himself beyond the reach of mercy.

The defense of Peter: V. 29. **Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men. V. 30. The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree. V. 31. Him hath God exalted with His right hand to be a Prince and a Savior, for to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins.** V. 32. **And we are His witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey Him.** While Peter was the chief spokesman upon this occasion, the other apostles gave a good account of themselves, and he but voiced the conviction of their hearts. The very first words in the defense of the apostles established a great principle in the Christian Church: To obey God rather than men is the obligation resting upon us. If the rulers wanted to charge them with disobedience, that charge might well stand, and they would cheerfully plead guilty, just as they told the Jewish leaders in advance that they would not and could not obey, chap. 4, 19. 20. Where matters of the kingdom of God are concerned, the preaching of the Gospel, no prohibiting, threatening, mocking, or abuse would be of any avail. In these matters the government has no jurisdiction. Wherever there is a clear statement of Scriptures, there the Christians will hold fast the truth and the protection of the Lord, and were the whole world to condemn them. And so far as the second part of the high priest's charge was concerned, that the continued preaching of the risen Christ might cause insurrection and tumult, the apostles boldly repeat what they had witnessed to before. It was not a strange and foreign God, but the God of their fathers whom they proclaimed, the God of Israel, who had raised Jesus from the dead, that same Jesus upon whom the rulers had laid unholy hands in killing Him by hanging Him to the tree of the cross. This testifying of God to the person and the work of Jesus not only proved that it was innocent blood which they had shed, but it also received further confirmation by the fact that God had exalted Him to His right hand in heaven, to the full and continual use of His divine majesty and glory. In this way the Lord has made the despised Jesus a Leader or Prince and a Savior. And Jesus was now exercising the power of His office and the duties of His ministry in the effort to give repentance to Israel and the forgiveness of sins. It is His earnest, good, and gracious will to have the people turn from their evil ways and from the hardness of their hearts and to accept the forgiveness of sins which has been merited and is ready for all men. Both repentance and forgiveness of sins are free gifts of mercy on the part of the exalted Christ.[18] And of all these things the apostles are witnesses, of the death, of the resurrection, of the ascension of Christ. This testimony is moreover corroborated and confirmed by the Holy Ghost, who testifies in and with the apostles, who makes their testimony effective. This Spirit God has given to them that have the obedience of faith. On Pentecost Day the apostles had received an extraordinary demonstration of His power, but the same Spirit is ever given through the Word, by the acceptance of the great facts of our salvation, as taught by the apostles. It is this Spirit that testifies through the mouth of the Christians when they boldly give an acount of their faith. This brief speech of defense here made by the apostles was in itself a gift of the Holy Spirit and a striking fulfilment of the Lord's promise, Matt. 11, 19.

The counsel of Gamaliel: V. 33. **When they heard that, they were cut to the heart, and took counsel to slay them.** V. 34. **Then stood there up one in the council, a Pharisee, named Gamaliel, a doctor of the Law, had in reputation among all the people, and commanded to put the apostles forth a little space;** v. 35. **and said unto them, Ye men of Israel, take heed to yourselves what ye intend to do as touching these men.** V. 36. **For before these days rose up Theudas, boasting himself to be somebody; to whom a number of men, about four hundred, joined themselves; who was slain, and all, as many as obeyed him, were scattered and brought to naught.** V. 37. **After this man rose up Judas of Galilee in the days of the taxing, and drew away much people after him; he also perished, and all, even as many as obeyed him, were dispersed.** The address of Peter, in which he and also the other apostles defended themselves against the attacks of the Jewish

18) *Formula Concordiae.* De Libero Arbitrio. Mueller, 594. 595.

leaders, was characterized by the candor and fearlessness which should ever mark the proclamation of the truth. But the members of the Sanhedrin, instead of giving heed to the truth and permitting repentance unto the forgiveness of sins to be worked in them, were, literally, sawed asunder to the heart, they were filled with the most violent indignation. One thought and one object therefore filled the minds of most of them, namely, to rid themselves of the disciples as they had done of the Master, to put the apostles to death. But at this crisis the calmer counsel of one of the members prevailed. For in his place in the Council arose a Pharisee by the name of Gamaliel, a learned teacher of the Law, highly respected and esteemed by all the people, whose word therefore had considerable influence, and commanded, first of all, that the accused men should be put out for a little while, since he wanted to speak in a confidential matter. Having held the floor until this was done, Gamaliel then addressed the Sanhedrin, giving them the honoring appellation of "men of Jerusalem." He cautioned his fellow-counselors to exercise all care with respect to these men, and to weigh every act with great deliberation before putting it into execution. He substantiates his caution with a reference to historical facts, especially as to seditions and insurrections in their country. There had been one Theudas not long before this, not the one mentioned by Josephus as having found his end in 44 A. D., but another man by the same name, probably the father or some other kinsman of this later Theudas. This man had advertised himself as a somebody, as a great man, and thus managed to get a following of some four hundred men, just as any demagog may count upon some adherents. But this man had been promptly put to death, his followers had been scattered to the four winds, and the entire movement had fallen flat, without result. After this, in the days of the great census, which Luke distinguishes in this way (6—8 A. D.),[19] another rebel, Judas of Galilee, arose, so called after the scene of his chief exploits, or Judas of Gaulanitis, after the place of his birth. Since this great census, under Quirinius's second Roman administration, involved not only numbering and valuation of property, but the imposition of a tax as well, it is not surprising that Judas easily drew away much people, quickly gained a following. But his fate was the same as that of Theudas. He had also perished, he soon had found his end, and all those that had put any obedience and trust in him had been dispersed by the authorities. Gamaliel might have multiplied the number of examples, because, as Josephus reports, there were minor revolts and attempts at insurrection almost continually in some parts of Palestine, but he had said enough to make his point.

19) Ramsay, *The Bearing of Recent Discovery*, 238.

Gamaliel's suggestion and the result: V. 38. **And now I say unto you, Refrain from these men and let them alone; for if this counsel or this work be of men, it will come to naught; v. 39. but if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it, lest haply ye be found even to fight against God. V. 40. And to him they agreed; and when they had called the apostles and beaten them, they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. V. 41. And they departed from the presence of the Council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name. V. 42. And daily in the Temple and in every house they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ.** Whether Gamaliel secretly favored the cause of Christ, but for various reasons did not join the congregation, or whether he spoke his opinion out of a natural sense of expediency and justice, cannot be decided from the Biblical account. But his purpose in adducing the examples to which he refers, the point that he wishes to make, is this, that the movement which the Sanhedrin was combating must not be suppressed with violence; in fact, there was some doubt as to the wisdom of opposing it at all. His proposition, as he stated it very clearly and emphatically, was that they should stand back from these men, the apostles, and leave them alone. And here Gamaliel adds a proverbial saying or axiom which has not lost its force to this day: If of men this counsel or this work is, it will be utterly destroyed; but if it be of God, ye can destroy neither. "If man's it be, 'tis bound to die; if God's it be, it cannot die." Rightly understood, this rule finds its application at all times. It is true indeed that many a Christian congregation and national Church, which had been planted by God, as the Church of Asia Minor, has been destroyed, and that, on the other hand, many a citadel of Satan, as the kingdom of Antichrist, has continued to this day. But such conditions and circumstances are due to man's hardness of heart, and the fact that God permits their existing is His punishment upon a stiff-necked people that will not accept the truth. Gamaliel's advice was accepted as sound and good by all the judges, and they passed a resolution to that effect. The apostles were thereupon brought back into the council-chamber, to receive, first of all, a scourging for having transgressed the former command of the Council. Cp. Deut. 25, 1—3; 2 Cor. 11, 24; 12, 10. Before they were released, they were then once more sternly bidden not to speak in the name of Jesus. Note: Those that refuse to accept the Gospel for the salvation of their souls are only embittered and hardened ever more and more with each proclamation of God's mercy; for the Word of the Gospel becomes for them a savor of death unto death. Instead, however, of intimidating the apostles with this

harsh treatment, the judges caused them to give a grand exhibition of faith and trust. Having received their scourging, the disciples left the council-chamber full of joy that they had been found worthy of bearing the reproach of Christ's name, of having some of the same shame and disgrace heaped upon them that had been laid upon their Lord. And just as openly they carried out their intention not to obey the Sanhedrin in the matter of denying their Master. They ceased not, every day, in the Temple, as well as in the houses, both publicly and privately, to teach and to preach the name of Christ Jesus, the Savior. The public proclamation of the Word was supplemented by individual instruction, just as it should be in our days. Note: The Word of God cannot be hindered without God's permission. He holds His sheltering hands over the Christians that proclaim to the world the Word of Life.

Summary. *The hypocrites Ananias and Sapphira are struck by the judgment of God, after which the apostles are imprisoned by the Sadducees, delivered by the angel of the Lord, defend themselves before the Sanhedrin, and are released after a scourging.*

CHAPTER 6.

The Choosing of the First Deacons.

Acts 6, 1—8.

The matter laid before the congregation: V. 1. **And in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministration.** V. 2. **Then the Twelve called the multitude of the disciples unto them and said, It is not reason that we should leave the Word of God and serve tables.** V. 3. **Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business.** V. 4. **But we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the Word.** Luke, having given an account of the second persecution which struck the apostles, returns once more to his history of the progress of the Christian Church. He introduces a new recital, a new paragraph, or section. It was in those days when the number of the disciples was multiplying, was growing very rapidly, that an internal danger arose in the very midst of the congregation. "The facility with which impure elements could become associated in the Church with the pure was proportioned to its numerical increase. And when the provision which was made for the poor became more and more ample, this circumstance itself may have attracted many needy persons." 20) The disturbing, disquieting matter in this case was that an open murmuring and grumbling of dissatisfaction arose in the congregation. Two kinds of Jews were represented in the Church at Jerusalem, the Jews, or Hebrews proper, that had been born in Judea and had grown up in the midst of the old Jewish customs, and Grecian Jews, or Hellenists, Jews of foreign birth and Greek education, speaking the common Greek dialect and more or less acquainted with Greek habits of life. In general, the Hebrews and the Grecian Jews were united in the work of the congregation in full harmony, chap. 2, 46; 4, 32. External distinctions, of wealth, social position, language, habits of living, etc., should never influence the harmonious activity of the Church in a disagreeable manner. But here a peculiar difficulty had arisen. Communism had in no way been introduced, but a very full provision had been made for the needy by the liberality of the wealthier members. The funds thus obtained were in charge of the apostles, chap. 4, 35, who distributed them to the poor and to the widows. Under the circumstances: the rapid growth of the congregation, the increasing number of those that were dependent upon the bounty of the congregation, the fact that the Grecian Jews were not so well known in person to the apostles, an oversight was easily possible. One or more widows that felt themselves entitled to this service had been overlooked when the apostles made their daily rounds. And immediately the devil, the spirit of dissension and strife, inspired the thought that this was an intentional slight. Similar complaints and charges are sometimes made in our days also, and with as little ground. As long as fallible human beings are trying to serve other human beings that are just as fallible, mistakes are liable to happen, which should be adjusted without uncharitable grumbling. Whatever ground there may have been for dissatisfaction, the apostles, on their part, did not want the suspicion of partiality to rest upon them. They therefore called a meeting of the entire congregation and laid the matter before all the disciples. It certainly was not the right, the proper thing for them to abandon, to give up the Word of God, both in public preaching and in individual instruction, in order to serve at tables, to attend to a ministry which might well be done by others. Their chief, their principal work was the care of souls, the preaching of the Gospel. They proposed to the assembly, therefore, that they, as brethren, should look about for seven men. The qualifications of these men are stated by the apostles as being chiefly three. They must have a good reputation both within and without the Church, as men of integrity and blameless life; they must

20) Schaff, *Commentary, Acts*, 103.

be filled with the Holy Ghost, who imparts to them the mercy of Christ and the power to lead a holy life; they must be filled with wisdom, with practical wisdom, with good common sense that enables men to manage complicated business affairs to the full satisfaction of all concerned. These men should be officially appointed to take care of the present need, to have charge of this business of the congregation. Note that the business side of a Christian congregation was emphasized in the first stated meeting of the first body that bore that title. "In that case this story is useful and good that we consider the example of the apostles well and learn what kind of men are to be used for that office, for which St. Stephen permitted himself to be used. . . . To have a good report is that one has kept himself honest and without reproach in all things, that one has not, as the world now commonly does, either been shamefully avaricious or squandered money and goods. . . . Then also the Holy Ghost belongs here. For to have the Holy Ghost is nothing but being a Christian, to love the Word of God, to hear it gladly, to arrange one's life accordingly, and to maintain a good conscience. All these are the work and fruit of the Holy Ghost. But now it may well be that a person have both a good report and the Holy Ghost, and still not be fit for such office; therefore they say: Such people should also be wise, full of ability and practise. . . . For this office needs practical heads, if otherwise it shall be exercised with use and propriety. Lazy, unwilling, careless, unfit people cannot be used for this office." 21) These qualifications should be kept in mind also in our days, whenever officers of the church are to be elected; there is too much thoughtless, haphazard choosing, with consequent dissatisfaction and harm to the congregation. While the men that were thus to be appointed should have charge of this special service, the supplying of those things which were necessary for the bodily sustenance of the poor and the widows, the apostles themselves wanted to devote all their time and energy to prayer and the ministry of the Word; in these matters they wanted to persevere to the exclusion of everything else. The Christian preachers of all times have the office of the ministry of the Word. That is the most important service in the kingdom of God; upon it depends the salvation of souls. It is by no means a small and insignificant matter to proclaim the Word of God before the whole congregation, and also to apply it in the individual cases. And, in addition to that, this ministry is a ministry of prayer. The responsibility of every soul in the congregation rests upon the pastor, and he will bring the needs of each and all before the heavenly Father in daily prayer and intercession. Services in the congregation that interfere with this chief business should be entrusted to other men, to whom the Lord has given the necessary qualifications.

The election: **V. 5. And the saying pleased the whole multitude; and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolas, a proselyte of Antioch, v. 6. whom they set before the apostles; and when they had prayed, they laid their hands on them. V. 7. And the Word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith. V. 8. And Stephen, full of faith and power, did great wonders and miracles among the people.** In laying their proposition before the congregation, the apostles, although the inspired teachers of the Church, made no arbitrary demands; there is no evidence of hierarchical aspirations. The congregation was to decide as to its course in this matter. But the wisdom of the solution was so obvious that the congregation did not hesitate to act upon it: The word was pleasant before them all. And so they proceeded to elect, choose, seven men that had the attributes named by the apostles: Stephen, of whom it is emphatically stated that he was full of faith, not faithfulness, but belief in the Savior, from which all virtues flow; Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas, the last-named being a Jewish proselyte hailing from Antioch. It is notable that all the names are Greek names, and although the argument is not conclusive, it is very probable that the generosity of the congregation prompted them to select only Grecian Jews and Greeks for the office. Selfishness and jealousy were to be absolutely unknown in their midst. It is altogether in accordance with the Word and will of God if Christian congregations elect all their own officers and have charge of all their own affairs. And wherever there is danger of disruption, it is far better to yield in indifferent matters and to let charity alone rule. The newly elected deacons were then set before the apostles, who prayed over them with laying on of hands. This was a fine, significant ceremony, by which they were inducted into office, and is properly in use in the Christian Church to this day, but not by divine command.

By the appointment of these seven officers to have charge of the daily ministrations, the apostles gained much time for their important duties, for preaching and teaching and praying, with the result that their work was far more effective than before. The Word of God grew in power, in influence; the number of disciples in Jerusalem was greatly increased; and even a large number of priests were obedient to the faith, accepted the teaching of the faith in Jesus as their Savior. These priests, as the chief servants of the old forms, must have belonged to the most violent opponents of the

21) Luther, 13a, 1060. 1061.

Church, and their conversion signified a great victory of Christ in the midst of His enemies. It is especially notable that the wonderful change is ascribed to the Word of God, which effectually works wherever it is proclaimed. One of the most zealous exponents of the Word at this time was Stephen, one of the seven deacons that had been elected by the congregation. It is emphasized once more that he was full of faith and power. His faith in Jesus the Redeemer was soundly established. And out of this grew favor with God and man, virtue and power. "Power here means activity or act; as though he would say: He had such a great faith, therefore he also did much and was mighty in deed. For where there is the right faith, there the deed will also follow; and the greater the faith, the more active it is in doing." 22) But it was a special manifestation of the Spirit's power which enabled Stephen to perform miracles and great signs among the people. God does His work in His own way, after His own methods, and He had need of Stephen at this time.

The Testimony of Stephen. Acts 6, 9—15.

V. 9. Then there arose certain of the synagog, which is called the synagog of the Libertines, and Cyrenians, and Alexandrians, and of them of Cilicia, and of Asia, disputing with Stephen. V. 10. And they were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit by which he spake. V. 11. Then they suborned men, which said, We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses and against God. V. 12. And they stirred up the people, and the elders, and the scribes, and came upon him, and caught him, and brought him to the Council, v. 13. and set up false witnesses, which said, This man ceaseth not to speak blasphemous words against this holy place and the Law; v. 14. for we have heard him say that this Jesus of Nazareth shall destroy this place, and shall change the customs which Moses delivered us. V. 15. And all that sat in the Council, looking steadfastly on him, saw his face as it had been the face of an angel. The activity which Stephen displayed in the interest of his Lord was not confined to the congregation. The zeal of every true Christian will show itself in true missionary effort, in the attempt by testimony and by apology to gain believers for Christ. Stephen soon attracted the attention and excited the jealousy and enmity of the unbelieving Jews. Among the great number of synagogs in Jerusalem (rabbinic writers state that there were 480) there were also such as were formed by Jews from certain countries in the Diaspora, since they would naturally be attracted to one another by language and customs. There was one whose membership consisted of Roman freedmen, former captive Jews that were brought to Rome by Pompey; another was made up of Jews hailing from Cyrene in Africa, a third of such as had lived in Alexandria; a fourth had members exclusively from Cilicia, a fifth such as hailed from the province of Asia on the Aegean Sea. All these synagogs sent representatives, probably to the Temple, where the public meetings of the congregation were held, to debate with Stephen in disputatious questioning. It is more than likely that among these men there was also Saul of Tarsus in Cilicia, a Pharisee of the Pharisees in orthodoxy and zeal. But whatever methods of argumentation these able debaters used, they were of no avail in this case; they were unable to withstand the wisdom and the spirit with which Stephen spoke. For it was the Holy Spirit Himself who was present and spoke in and through this disciple, Luke 21, 15. The proofs which Stephen adduced in this battle of intellects were of such a nature that they could not be questioned by the opponents. They were routed all along the line and were obliged to retire in confusion.

This defeat in a field in which they had supposed themselves undisputed masters rankled in the minds of these enemies of Christ. And, open warfare having failed, they resorted to slander and violence. They deliberately suborned men, hired them to repeat certain statements under oath which were directed against Stephen. The latter had probably stated that the true believers are no longer under the Law and warned the unbelieving Jews of the judgment which was to strike the Holy City and the Temple. These words could easily be made to represent a blasphemy against the teaching of Moses in the sense of the Jews and against God. With this construction placed upon the statements of Stephen, it was an easy matter to stir up, to excite and move deeply, the fanatical Jews, the common people as well as the elders and the scribes. It was a part of the cunning design to gain the people first, since the Sanhedrin would more readily take action if they felt that the people were on their side in this matter, and no longer favored the apostles and their followers. Having thus prepared the way, they came upon Stephen suddenly, surprised him while he was still unaware of any hostile intention on their part, took him by force, and brought him before the Sanhedrin for trial. Whether the Council was in regular session or had convened in anticipation of this arrest, is immaterial. No sooner was Stephen arraigned than they brought forth their lying witnesses, who had been carefully drilled in the part they were to play. And the perjurers followed orders very strictly, testifying that they had heard the prisoner say that Jesus of Nazareth would utterly destroy this place, and would completely change the customs that had been transmitted to them by Moses. Note: The enemies of Jesus had evidently learned something

22) Luther, 12, 193.

from the trial of Christ and from subsequent experience. The Pharisees had definite charges framed against Stephen, and they produced witnesses that had been carefully drilled in their rôle. It was an intensely dramatic, impressive moment when the charges had been fully presented and all the testimony of the witnesses had been heard. The eyes of all the members of the Council were firmly fixed upon Stephen, expecting, of course, that he would answer upon the charges in one way or the other. And here God gave visible evidence that He supported His servant and would be with him to the end. For the judges saw Stephen's face as though it had been the face of an angel. This is not a description of extraordinary physical beauty, but of a supernatural brightness, like that on the face of Moses after he had spoken with God. Such a heavenly brilliance was fitting on the face of one to whom the glory of the Lord had been revealed. Note: Like Stephen, every Christian preacher that testifies fearlessly concerning Christ and His Word, may easily become involved in debate with the enemies of Christ. And when the unbelievers have been conquered by facts from the Word of God, they try to take revenge by threatening and blaspheming, and, if possible, they try to suppress the truth with violence. Many a witness for Christ has thus been branded as a blasphemer, a traitor, and a rebel in both spiritual and temporal courts.

Summary. *To remedy an urgent need, the congregation at Jerusalem, at the suggestion of the apostles, elects seven deacons to minister to the poor and the widows, one of whom, Stephen, testifies for Christ and is arraigned before the Sanhedrin.*

CHAPTER 7.

The Defense of Stephen and His Death.

Acts 7, 1—60.

Stephen refers to the call of Abraham: V. 1. **Then said the high priest, Are these things so?** V. 2. **And he said, Men, brethren, and fathers, hearken: The God of glory appeared unto our father Abraham when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Charran,** v. 3. **and said unto him, Get thee out of thy country and from thy kindred, and come into the land which I shall show thee.** V. 4. **Then came he out of the land of the Chaldeans and dwelt in Charran; and from thence, when his father was dead, He removed him into this land, wherein ye now dwell.** V. 5. **And He gave him none inheritance in it, no, not so much as to set his foot on; yet He promised that He would give it to him for a possession and to his seed after him when as yet he had no child.** The charges having been preferred, the president of the Sanhedrin, the high priest, gave Stephen permission to answer upon them. And Stephen opens his speech of defense with a respectful address to the judges, some of whom were of his own age and station, and thus might well be called brethren, while others were venerable with age, and thus should be called fathers. The very first words of his speech make it clear that he intends to correct some prevalent notions. The glory of God in the cloud of the covenant, the so-called Shechinah, was not confined to the Tabernacle or to the Temple, but the God of glory, the Possessor of the unlimited divine majesty, revealed Himself also at other places, just as it suited His purposes. It was thus that He appeared to Abraham while the latter was still living in Mesopotamia, in Ur of the Chaldees, before the entire family moved to Charran, or Haran, Gen. 11, 31; 12, 1. In Charran, Abraham had received the command of the Lord to leave both his country and his kindred, and to move to the country which even Terah had had in mind before his death. So Abraham, at that time Abram, had completed the removal to the land of Canaan, where he lived as a stranger among the Canaanites, not having so much as where he could place his foot to call his own. It is true, indeed, that both Abraham and Jacob had small parcels of land in Canaan, but they had them by purchase, not by God's gift, and Abraham was even obliged to buy a burying-place for his wife, Gen. 23. Thus the promise of God to Abraham that he, and his descendants after him, should have the land as their possession, at a time when he did not even have a child of his own, required a very strong faith.

The promise to Abraham: V. 6. **And God spake on this wise, That his seed should sojourn in a strange land; and that they should bring them into bondage, and entreat them evil four hundred years.** V. 7. **And the nation to whom they shall be in bondage will I judge, said God; and after that shall they come forth, and serve Me in this place.** V. 8. **And He gave him the covenant of circumcision; and so Abraham begat Isaac, and circumcised him the eighth day; and Isaac begat Jacob; and Jacob begat the twelve patriarchs.** For Abraham the promises of God provided one trial of faith after the other. Long before he had a son, the Lord told him that his descendants would be enslaved in a strange land, where they would be kept a matter of some four hundred years, Gen. 15, 13. 16, the exact number being given in other passages of Scriptures, Gal. 3, 17. Incidentally, however, there was comfort for Abraham in the fact that God promised to judge, to speak the condemning sentence upon,

the cruel masters, in order to bring His people out eventually to serve, to worship Him in this place, in Jerusalem, Ex. 3, 12. Still later God gave to Abraham the covenant and the rite of circumcision, as the first sacrament of the Old Testament Church, and when finally Isaac was born, he was received into the covenant by this rite. And so, in due course, Jacob was begotten, and finally the twelve patriarchs, the sons of Israel.

The story of Jacob and Joseph: V. 9. **And the patriarchs, moved with envy, sold Joseph into Egypt; but God was with him,** v. 10. **and delivered him out of all his afflictions, and gave him favor and wisdom in the sight of Pharaoh, king of Egypt; and he made him governor over Egypt and all his house.** V. 11. **Now there came a dearth over all the land of Egypt and Canaan and great affliction, and our fathers found no sustenance.** V. 12. **But when Jacob heard that there was corn in Egypt, he sent out our fathers first.** V. 13. **And at the second time Joseph was made known to his brethren; and Joseph's kindred was made known unto Pharaoh.** V. 14. **Then sent Joseph and called his father Jacob to him and all his kindred, threescore and fifteen souls.** V. 15. **So Jacob went down into Egypt, and died, he and our fathers,** v. 16. **and were carried over into Sychem, and laid in the sepulcher that Abraham bought for a sum of money of the sons of Emmor, the father of Sychem.** The account moves forward with the same interesting, graphic force as before, and is just as skilfully abridged. The brothers of Joseph were jealous of the favor in which his father held him, and in a fit of envy sold him to the Midianites and thus, through them, into Egypt, Gen. 37, 4. 11. 28. But here again, as Stephen emphasizes, God was with Joseph, delivering him out of all his misfortunes and tribulations, which befell him also in the land of his bondage, and giving him both favor and wisdom before Pharaoh, the king of Egypt. The Hebrew slave, unknown a few hours before, was made the ruler of Egypt and the manager of the king's house as well. Then came the famine, striking not only Egypt, but Canaan as well, and causing great suffering, making not only the ordinary bread scarce, but all food made of corn. But the news having been brought that Egypt was provided with grain for food, Jacob sent his sons down there for the first time, Gen. 42, 1. At their second coming Joseph made himself known to his brethren, a fact which also made the family and the origin of Joseph known to Pharaoh. It was then that Joseph sent to fetch his aged father to Egypt and his entire relationship. Stephen here does not speak in opposition to Gen. 46, 27, where only seventy souls are mentioned, but follows the Greek translation of the Old Testament, the so-called Septuagint, which is thus substantiated by the Spirit of God. For by taking the number seventy-five, the text follows the manner of the Genesis account, and includes the two sons of Manasseh, the two sons of Ephraim, and the grandson of the latter. Jacob, having removed to Egypt, died there in due time, and all his sons died there as well. By a special request and promise which Jacob had taken from Joseph with an oath, his body was taken to Canaan and buried in the cave of the field of Machpelah, Gen. 50, 13. This cave Abraham had purchased from Ephron the Hittite, Gen. 23, 16. Jacob had purchased a parcel of ground from Emmor, or Hamor, the father of Schechem, after whom the entire countryside was named, Gen. 33, 19. There Joseph was buried, and very probably all the other sons of Jacob as well, Josh. 24, 32, as Jerome, who lived in Palestine in the fourth century, reports. Thus the two accounts are contracted into one in the brief account of Stephen.

The birth and youth of Moses: V. 17. **But when the time of the promise drew nigh which God had sworn to Abraham, the people grew and multiplied in Egypt,** v. 18. **till another king arose which knew not Joseph.** V. 19. **The same dealt subtilly with our kindred, and evil entreated our fathers, so that they cast out their young children, to the end they might not live.** V. 20. **In which time Moses was born, and was exceeding fair, and nourished up in his father's house three months;** v. 21. **and when he was cast out, Pharaoh's daughter took him up, and nourished him for her own son.** V. 22. **And Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and in deeds.** After the death of Jacob, of Joseph, and the patriarchs, the sojourn of the children of Israel in Egypt was pleasant enough for several centuries. But even as, in the same degree that, the time of their stay according to God's promise was drawing to a close, the people grew and became plentiful in Egypt. Their rapid increase corresponded to the rapid approach of the time set by God. This remarkable growth was in accordance with the promise given to Abraham by God. This continued until a different king arose in Egypt; a new dynasty was established by conquest. The new Pharaoh very naturally neither knew of, nor cared about, Joseph and the blessing which he had brought to the land of Egypt, being concerned far more about the rapid multiplying of the strange people occupying a very desirable part of the country. So he hit upon a scheme which was certainly a wise stratagem from the standpoint of the Egyptians, although it resulted in an evil treatment of the children of Israel, in afflictions of all kinds, whose culmination, in a way, was the order to cast into the Nile the children, all the boys that were born to the Israelites, in order that they might not be preserved alive. It was when matters had come to this point that Moses

was born, in conformity with God's plan of deliverance for the Jews, as the words of Stephen indicate, for he was exceeding fair, fair to God, in the judgment of God; his was not only an extraordinary bodily beauty, but the indications of unusual mental endowment were very favorable. For three months his mother kept him hid and nourished him, gave him all the care that a child should have. And when she finally did expose him, it was, by the direction of God, at a place where Thermuthis, the daughter of Pharaoh, found the child, took him up out of his little vessel, and nourished him to be her own son. She practically, if not actually, adopted him. And in his capacity as the foster-son of the princess, Moses enjoyed unusual advantages, and Stephen here supplements the Old Testament account. Moses was brought up, taught, educated in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, very probably attending their great schools of learning corresponding to our modern universities, thus receiving a mental training which was second to none in the world of those days. Note: This thorough training afterwards stood Moses in good stead, for it was true then as it is now that all the arts and sciences in the world shall serve the one greatest science, theology, and the preaching of the Gospel. The result, in the case of Moses, certainly justified all efforts made in his behalf, for he was mighty in words and deeds. He was full of vigor and energy in carrying forward any project, even if he may have been lacking in facility of expression, Ex. 4, 10. What he lacked in grace and polish he more than compensated for by depth and power. Herein Moses is a model for all men whom God has placed in positions of leadership in His Church.

Moses attempts to deliver his people: V. 23. **And when he was full forty years old, it came into his heart to visit his brethren, the children of Israel.** V. 24. **And seeing one of them suffer wrong, he defended him, and avenged him that was oppressed, and smote the Egyptian;** v. 25. **for he supposed his brethren would have understood how that God by his hand would deliver them; but they understood not.** V. 26. **And the next day he showed himself unto them as they strove, and would have set them at one again, saying, Sirs, ye are brethren; why do ye wrong one to another?** V. 27. **But he that did his neighbor wrong thrust him away, saying, Who made thee a ruler and a judge over us?** V. 28. **Wilt thou kill me as thou diddest the Egyptian yesterday?** V. 29. **Then fled Moses at this saying, and was a stranger in the land of Midian, where he begat two sons.** The events narrated in Ex. 2 are here briefly reviewed. The entire training of Moses under the direction of his foster-mother may well have taken until he was almost forty years old, since many years were devoted to the study of mathematics, natural philosophy, and medicine, in all of which branches the advance made by the Egyptians is little short of remarkable. But he must have been fully aware of his parentage during this whole time, for his own mother had been his nurse and had undoubtedly imparted to him the promises of the Lord and the prophecy concerning the deliverance of His people from the bondage of Egypt. When Moses therefore had turned forty, the thought arose in his heart to look upon, to visit his brethren, the children of Israel. It can hardly be assumed that he had at that time received any revelation from the Lord as to his future position among his enslaved brethren, although there was a Jewish tradition which stated that Amram, the father of Moses, had received some intimation from God that his son would be the leader in the deliverance of the Jews. Upon this occasion, Moses saw that one of his brethren was being ill-treated, and he promptly sprang to his defense. He wrought speedy justice and revenge for the oppressed by killing the Egyptian that had transgressed his authority. Note: The act of Moses in this instance was not a murder, for he was an Egyptian prince with absolute power over life and death, and he is nowhere in Scriptures censured for it, but it was a rash act, since he had no right to anticipate the providence of God simply because of his personal belief in the divine destiny of Israel. The effort of Moses was premature and unauthorized. He supposed that his brethren understood that God was giving them salvation, deliverance through his hand, but they did not understand; they resented the interference of the prince of Egypt as unwarranted officiousness. When he therefore tried to reconcile two quarreling Israelites the next day and attempted to establish peace by gently rebuking them: Men, you are brethren, why do you wrong each other? he was met by a decided rebuff: Who has established thee as a ruler and judge over us? Far from rising under his leadership and striking for liberty, his countrymen rejected all his offers with vehemence and even aided in making public his effort in their behalf. So Moses fled and became a stranger in the land of Midian, out in the wilderness, where he was married to a native girl and became the father of two sons, Ex. 2, 22; 4, 25; 18, 3—5. Moses fled from Egypt because he had nothing to hope for from his own people and also because his life was no longer safe. Many a matter which in itself is altogether praiseworthy is undertaken upon man's own initiative without success, but the same thing is afterward, at God's time, carried to a successful conclusion. Zeal not according to knowledge may do almost as much harm as dilatoriness and procrastination.

The call of Moses: V. 30. **And when forty years were expired, there appeared to him in the wilderness of Mount Sina an angel of the Lord in a flame of fire in a bush.** V. 31. **When Moses saw it, he wondered at the sight; and as he drew near to behold**

it, the voice of the Lord came unto him, v. 32. **saying, I am the God of thy fathers, the God of Abraham and the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob. Then Moses trembled, and durst not behold.** V. 33. **Then said the Lord to him, Put off thy shoes from thy feet; for the place where thou standest is holy ground.** V. 34. **I have seen, I have seen the affliction of My people which is in Egypt, and I have heard their groaning, and am come down to deliver them. And now come, I will send thee into Egypt.** When forty years were fulfilled, after Moses had lived forty years in the wilderness near Mount Sinai, known then also as Horeb, a strange experience befell him. The angel of the Lord, Ex. 3, 2, *the* angel in the special meaning of the word, indicating the revelation of the Son of God in the Old Testament, appeared to him in a flame of fire of a bush, in a thornbush that seemed all aflame. The phenomenon caused Moses to wonder and to draw nearer to consider the matter closely. And then the voice of the Lord came to him out of the bush, designating Himself as the God of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob. Moses, now thoroughly terrified, did not so much as dare to look closely or to investigate the miracle. But the Lord immediately gave him his charge, bidding him first of all to unlace his sandals, since the place where he was standing was holy ground. And then, with all solemnity and impressiveness, came the call of the Lord itself: Seeing I have seen (I have had more than sufficient evidence of) the affliction of My people in Egypt, and I have heard their sighing, and I have come down to set them free; and now, come here, I shall send thee into Egypt. What Moses had hoped for and had attempted to carry out without success in his own power, was now to become a fact by God's will, according to His promise. It was now a matter of God's appointment, not of man's choice, and therefore of God's almighty power to back up the call. With God's call to rely upon, with God's command and promise clear, every servant of the Lord may set out with cheerful trust in the assured success of his venture.

Moses the deliverer: V. 35. **This Moses whom they refused, saying, Who made thee a ruler and a judge? the same did God send to be a ruler and a deliverer by the hand of the angel which appeared to him in the bush.** V. 36. **He brought them out after that he had showed wonders and signs in the land of Egypt and in the Red Sea and in the wilderness forty years.** For the sake of characterizing the Jews and emphasizing his point that they had always been a disobedient and obstinate people, Stephen here represents the whole nation as being involved in the first rejection of Moses. They had denied, had refused to acknowledge him as much as a ruler and a judge; but God, in taking the matter in hand, had made him not only the leader, or ruler, but in addition had given him more than the functions of a mere judge: He had sent him as their deliverer, with the helping and protecting hand of that Angel to assist him that had appeared to him in the bush. And Moses had performed his work as deliverer well. He had led the Israelites forth out of Egypt, after having performed wonders and signs in Egypt, as a judgment upon Pharaoh, just as he continued performing them at the Red Sea and during the entire journey through the wilderness which lasted forty years. The very person whom the Israelites had rejected and practically delivered up into the hands of Pharaoh to be slain was the one person by whom they were redeemed from their Egyptian bondage. The application to the parallel case of Jesus, which Stephen probably had in mind, may readily be made.

The disobedience of the Jews: V. 37. **This is that Moses which said unto the children of Israel, A Prophet shall the Lord, your God, raise up unto you of your brethren like unto me; Him shall ye hear.** V. 38. **This is he that was in the church in the wilderness with the angel which spake to him in the Mount Sina and with our fathers; who received the lively oracles to give unto us;** v. 39. **to whom our fathers would not obey, but thrust him from them, and in their hearts turned back again into Egypt,** v. 40. **saying unto Aaron, Make us gods to go before us; for as for this Moses which brought us out of the land of Egypt we wot not what is become of him.** V. 41. **And they made a calf in those days, and offered sacrifice unto the idol, and rejoiced in the works of their own hands.** With the progress of his speech of defense, the impassioned fervor of Stephen's arguments increases. He is preaching the Law, and he does not intend to soften its sledge-hammer blows by any alleviating circumstances until he has brought out his point properly. It was Moses, he once more reminds his judges, that referred to, prophesied, concerning another prophet, like unto himself, chap. 3, 22, demanding that they should yield obedience to Him, Moses thus being a supporter of the claims of Christ. It was Moses, again, who, in the midst of the congregation or assembly of the children of Israel in the wilderness, alone enjoyed the personal acquaintance and intimacy of the great Angel of the Lord that had spoken with him at Mount Sinai before, and who now, as the almighty God, spoke to the entire assembled nation. It was Moses, once more, that received the living words, the lively oracles or sayings from the mouth of God to give to the people. The laws of the Jews were not intended to be a dead letter, like the communications which the heathen priests claim to receive from their gods, but they possess vital power and efficacy. But in spite of all these express manifestations and witnesses of God to confirm the call of Moses and estab-

lish his position among the people, the Israelites, the fathers of the present race, as Stephen remarks, did not want to be obedient to Moses, but repelled, rejected him, and turned their hearts toward Egypt. They demanded of Aaron that he make them some sort of gods who might hereafter be considered their rulers and leaders through the wilderness, for Moses tarried so long on the mountain that they did not know what fate might have overtaken him, as they flippantly remark. And so they, through the hands of Aaron, who proved their willing tool, in those days made the figure of a calf, and brought burnt offerings before their idol and rejoiced, found their great pleasure and happiness, in the works of their own hands. The irony of Stephen is intentional, since one of his charges is that the Jews of his day also placed their trust in externals and expected to be saved by an outward observance of customs and ceremonies, many of which they had invented themselves. There is always danger, especially in a church that has been established for some time, of a dead orthodoxy, of a clinging to external forms although life has departed.

God's rejection of His people: V. 42. **Then God turned, and gave them up to worship the host of heaven; as it is written in the book of the prophets, O ye house of Israel, have ye offered to Me slain beasts and sacrifices by the space of forty years in the wilderness?** V. 43. **Yea, ye took up the tabernacle of Moloch and the star of your god Remphan, figures which ye made to worship them; and I will carry you away beyond Babylon.** Stephen here supplements the account of the Pentateuch, of the books of Moses, with a passage from the Prophet Amos, chap. 5, 25. 26. After this flagrant exhibition of disobedience, God turned from His people. It was a form of His judgment that He permitted them to go on in the way of idolatry; it was a curse upon their hardness of heart that He gave them up, abandoned them to the worship of the host of heaven, to star-worship as it was practised in Egypt, Chaldea, and Phenicia. Of this Amos had written: Did you really offer slain beasts and sacrifices to Me for the forty years in the wilderness? As though He would say: How could they possibly have been real and effectual and acceptable, as long as the people's affections were far from the Lord, bound up in the worship of idols? And therefore the Lord answers His question Himself. While the Israelites were pretending to be interested in the true worship only, the very Tabernacle of God, as a matter of fact, became to them a tabernacle of Moloch, of the Babylonian deity that was worshiped by many heathen nations, and with revolting customs, Jer. 32, 35; Lev. 18, 21. Aud thus also the Israelites had carried along with them a figure of their star-god Remphan, which seems to have been the Assyrian name for the planet Saturn. Such figures they served, giving to them the worship which was due to God only. And therefore the punishment of God's rejection came upon them, who had them carried away, taken into exile, not only beyond Damascus, as the prophet had written, but even beyond Babylon, as Stephen here adds from the evidence of history. It was God's condemnation upon an idolatrous nation, a lesson for all ages of the world.

The Tabernacle and the Temple: V. 44. **Our fathers had the Tabernacle of witness in the wilderness, as He had appointed, speaking unto Moses that he should make it according to the fashion that he had seen.** V. 45. **Which also our fathers that came after brought in with Jesus into the possession of the Gentiles, whom God drave out before the face of our fathers, unto the days of David;** v. 46. **who found favor before God, and desired to find a tabernacle for the God of Jacob.** V. 47. **But Solomon built Him an house.** V. 48. **Howbeit, the Most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands, as saith the prophet,** v. 49. **Heaven is My throne, and earth is My footstool; what house will ye build Me? saith the Lord; or what is the place of My rest?** V. 50. **Hath not My hand made all these things?** Stephen takes up the recital of the various houses of worship among the Jews with a purpose, since he wants to show that the dependence upon the forms of external worship are vain without true faith of the heart. That advantage the children of Israel in the wilderness had: they had the Tabernacle of the witness, where God Himself appeared and witnessed unto Himself. They had made it just as God, in His long conversation with Moses, Ex. 25, 40, had shown and commanded him. Moses had seen the pattern and plan of the entire tent and of all its appointments, and so it was made. And this same Tabernacle, the charge of which had been given to the people by Moses, they brought along with them as they entered into the Promised Land under the leadership of Joshua, when they occupied the former possession of the Gentiles. For the latter the Lord gradually drove out, expelled, before the children of Israel during a number of centuries, at the time of the judges and of Saul, until the time of David, the beloved of the Lord. At his time the conquest of the country was practically completed, the nations that had not been destroyed having been brought into subjection. David then, since he had found favor with God and was regarded very highly before Him, not only earnestly desired, but even asked to find, to build a lasting tabernacle to the Lord; and if the Temple had actually been of the value placed upon it by the later Jews, it might have been expected that God would have given His consent. But the Temple was not built by David, but by Solomon, 2 Chron. 6, 7—9. But Stephen wants his hearers to remember that the presence of the highest God is not confined to any building,

even though it were of the size and beauty of Solomon's Temple. The builder of the first Temple had himself confessed as much, 1 Kings 8, 27; 2 Chron. 6, 18. And the Prophet Isaiah had written in the same strain, chap. 66, 1. 2: Heaven is to Me a throne and the earth a stool for My feet; what manner of house will ye build to Me, saith the Lord, or what place for My resting? Has not My hand made all this? The absolute foolishness of the Jews in pinning their faith to the Temple which had taken the place of Solomon's, and upon the city in which it had been placed, could not have been brought out with greater force than in these words. The entire worship of the Jews had degenerated to become a mere observance of forms and customs, without life and true power. And Stephen had sketched the situation with a few strong, but fitting words, in order to present it to the eyes of his judges as it actually existed.

The peroration: V. 51. **Ye stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost; as your fathers did, so do ye.** V. 52. **Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? And they have slain them which showed before of the coming of the Just One; of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers;** v. 53. **who have received the Law by the disposition of angels, and have not kept it.** Stephen had now reviewed the whole history of the Jews, showing in what manner they had at all times acted toward the Lord and the leader whom the Lord had given them, relying rather upon outward forms and ceremonies, connected with a visible sanctuary, for a justification before God. Stephen's just indignation therefore reaches its culmination at this point of his recital. Boldly he tells his judges that they are stiff-necked, obstinate, refractory, unwilling to listen to reason, Ex. 33, 3. 5; 34, 9; Deut. 9, 6. And in addition to that, they are uncircumcised both as regards heart and ears, Lev. 26, 41; Jer. 6, 10; Ezek. 44, 7. 9. These were severe terms of reproach and contempt, placing the leaders of the Jews in a class with the heathen nations and with the apostate Jews. This severe denunciation Stephen corroborates by the charge that they were always, continually, resisting the Holy Ghost, literally, throwing themselves in His way, against Him, thus shutting off the working of His grace in their hearts. The Holy Spirit wanted to convert also these enemies of Christ, He was giving them every evidence of His gracious will toward them by having the Gospel preached before them for such a long time; but they deliberately, wilfully, refused to listen to His call. And herein they were following their fathers, of whose disobedience and obstinacy Stephen cited a number of cases. Every one of the ancient prophets the Jews had persecuted in one way or the other, and those that proclaimed in advance concerning the coming of the Righteous One they had killed. The prophets foretold the coming of Jesus Christ, the Just and Holy One, and their reward, at the hand of their countrymen, was death. And the spirit of these ancestors was yet alive, for those that were sitting in the Council to judge the present case had become the betrayers and murderers of this same just and holy Christ. And not only that, but Stephen declared that the very Law which was their boast, which they had received by the disposition of angels, probably in this manner, that the Lord spoke through the mouths of angels in proclaiming the Law on Mount Sinai, this Law they had not kept. Thus Stephen, in a burst of magnificent eloquence, preached the Law to these hardened hypocrites of the Sanhedrin, in order to work in them a true knowledge of their sin which might lead to repentance and faith. Note: The sermon of Stephen admonishes us Christians to be mindful of the great blessings of God under the new dispensation, lest we also become indifferent and then callous, and finally resist the work of the Holy Ghost.

The glory of God revealed to Stephen: V. 54. **When they heard these things, they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed on him with their teeth.** V. 55. **But he, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up steadfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God,** v. 56. **and said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing on the right hand of God.** Stephen's speech was probably not finished as he had intended, but the increasing impatience and the murmuring of his hearers did not permit him to conclude in such a way as to bring Jesus into greater prominence. For the indignant words of the accused cut the judges to the heart, literally, sawed asunder in or to their hearts. In uncontrollable anger they gnashed on him with their teeth, thus cutting off every further attempt to deliver his speech properly. But Stephen was here given a special grace, a manifestation of the Holy Ghost's power, which caused him to disregard and forget his surroundings altogether, and a revelation of God's glory such as has been vouchsafed to but few people. He firmly fixed his eyes upward to heaven and there saw the glory and majesty of God and Jesus standing at God's right hand, as though He were making ready to assist and to receive His servant, as one commentator has it. In a burst of ecstasy, Stephen testified to that which his eyes beheld by special grace of God. The Son of Man he called Jesus, the Redeemer, who, according to both natures, has gained a perfect redemption for all men. Note: Jesus, at the right hand of the Father, is ready to receive with open arms of love all those that rely upon the salvation earned by Him. Where He is, there shall also His servants be. He wants to receive them into His kingdom that they may see His glory and the glory and majesty of the Father. Thus the believers are,

through the merits of Christ, taken from this vale of tears to their heavenly home.

The stoning of Stephen: V. 57. **Then they cried out with a loud voice, and stopped their ears, and ran upon him with one accord,** v. 58. **and cast him out of the city, and stoned him; and the witnesses laid down their clothes at a young man's feet whose name was Saul.** V. 59. **And they stoned Stephen, calling upon God and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.** V. 60. **And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep.** The last announcement of Stephen, concerning the vision which was granted to him, raised the anger of the judges to a perfect storm of fury. That this man should receive such bliss before their very eyes caused them to forget dignity, justice, humanity, all the virtues of which they usually made their boast. They cried out with a loud voice, in order to drown out any attempt of Stephen to make himself heard in the resulting din and confusion. They held their ears shut tightly lest another word from his hated lips find entrance there. They rushed upon him with one accord, like a maddened herd of cattle over which all control has been lost. They cast him forth out of the city and there stoned him. This proceeding did not have even a show of right. It was against all the rules of the Jewish criminal law.[23]) It can in no way even be called an execution; it can be described only by the word "murder," committed by an infuriated mob, in violation of all law. And yet the mob retained enough sanity to observe some forms of the Law, such as taking the prisoner out of the city and also requiring the witnesses to begin the stoning. It is expressly stated that the witnesses, in making ready for their murderous attack, laid down their outer clothes at the feet of a young man by the name of Saul. As for Stephen, he died the death of a true Christian martyr. While the stones were flying around him, and after he had been struck, he called loudly upon his Lord and God, in the person of Jesus, the Savior. His first prayer was that the Lord Jesus, the exalted Christ, would receive his spirit. And having thus committed his soul into the best safe-keeping, he let his last sigh be an intercession for his murderers. Sinking down upon his knees, he cried out with a loud voice, which may, at least to one of those present, have sounded in his ears for years afterward: Lord, do not charge to them this sin. And then he calmly fell asleep in his Savior. Thus Stephen became the first martyr of the Christian Church. Since his time thousands of Christians have been martyred for the sake of the name of Jesus. And their death teaches a lesson, namely, that of cheerfully sacrificing temporal possessions and fortune for the sake of the Lord. In the end we gain everything that a reward of mercy can bestow upon us, heaven itself with all its glories. "Lastly, there is here a fine comfort that St. Stephen here sees the heavens standing open, and that he fell asleep. Here we should mark that our Lord God stands by us if we believe, and that death is not death to them that believe. Thus you have pictured here in this story the entire Gospel — faith, love, cross, death, and life." [24])

Summary. *Stephen delivers an eloquent speech of defense, which angers the members of the Sanhedrin so that they cast him out of the city and stone him.*

23) Edersheim, *The Temple*, 67.

24) Luther, 11, 2077.

CHAPTER 8.

The Gospel Planted in Samaria.

Acts 8, 1—25.

The burial of Stephen and the hatred of Saul: V. 1. **And Saul was consenting unto his death. And at that time there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles.** V. 2. **And devout men carried Stephen to his burial, and made great lamentation over him.** V. 3. **As for Saul, he made havoc of the Church, entering into every house, and, haling men and women, committed them to prison.** The young man Saul had been a witness of Stephen's stoning, and had considered it an honor to watch the clothes of the men that began the stoning, chap. 7, 58. It is here expressly stated that Saul consented to Stephen's death; he felt great satisfaction, great pleasure over his death, he approved it with joy. And his feeling was shared by his fellow-Pharisees, who now started a persecution which involved the entire congregation, determined, if possible, to exterminate the Church of Jesus. The result was a general dispersal and scattering of the disciples from Jerusalem into the various Jewish provinces, especially Judea proper, the rural districts of the section about Jerusalem, but also to the regions of Samaria. Cp. chap. 1, 8. It was not the fear of martyrdom, of death, which caused these first disciples to flee, but the express command of Christ, Matt. 10, 23. "Had they fled through the fear of death, they would have taken care not to provoke persecution to follow them by continuing to proclaim the same truths that

provoked it in the first instance." 25) Only the apostles remained in Jerusalem. The small remnant of the congregation that was obliged to remain in Jerusalem very probably consisted of such as had the greatest need of the teaching and the comfort of the Word. For a pastor to leave his post in time of persecution, when the danger threatens his members as well as himself, in most cases amounts to plain unfaithfulness. Meanwhile, however, before the general scattering of the disciples took place, the burial of Stephen was attended to in a proper manner. Devout, pious men from among his fellow-believers carried him out to his last resting-place and attended to all the matters pertaining to his burial. They then made a great lamentation over him, probably beating their breasts and their heads in token of their deep grief. It is altogether pleasing to the Lord if Christians bury their dead in an honorable fashion, and the lamenting over the death of loved ones, if kept within proper bounds, has been hallowed by the tears of Jesus Himself at the grave of Lazarus. But all these facts, even if they were known to Saul and were, in part, intended in the nature of a protest against the murder of Stephen, made no impression upon him. If anything, he became all the more unreasonable and furious in his enmity toward Christ and the Church. Without ceasing, continually, he laid waste, devastated, the Church, like a hostile army spreading ruin and devastation in its wake, Ps. 80, 13. In so doing, he entered into every house which was known to belong to a Christian, particularly into those which served as places for Christian assembly. And both men and women whom he found at such times he dragged forth, he haled them out as though preparing them for trial, and committed them to prison, with the consent of the authorities gave them into the charge of the keepers of the prison. This persecution was the first real test to which the members of the congregation at Jerusalem were subjected. Till now it had all been peaceful growth; but now the storm was to test the strength of the young plant, and of every branch and shoot on the tender stem.

The missionary work of the disciples and of Philip: V. 4. **Therefore they that were scattered abroad went everywhere, preaching the Word.** V. 5. **Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them.** V. 6. **And the people with one accord gave heed unto those things which Philip spake, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did.** V. 7. **For unclean spirits, crying with loud voice, came out of many that were possessed with them; and many taken with palsies, and that were lame, were healed.** V. 8. **And there was great joy in that city.** While the apostles remained in Jerusalem with the small remnant of the former large congregation, escaping personal injury probably only because of a superstitious fear of their power to perform miracles, the disciples that were driven from Jerusalem by the persecution were ever mindful of the command of their Lord Jesus. They journeyed everywhere; and wherever they came, they brought the joyous message of the Word, the gracious Gospel of the Savior. Note: The men that went out at this time were not members of the teaching staff of the congregation, they were so-called lay-members, and yet they brought the message of the Gospel wherever they went. Every Christian, learned or unlearned, can and should give testimony of the faith of his heart, and thus try to gain souls for the Savior. But in all these missionary endeavors the work of one man stood out very prominently, namely, that of Philip, one of the seven officers elected by the congregation, chap. 6, 5. His work as deacon having been terminated by the persecution in Jerusalem, he became an evangelist. He made the journey either to one of the cities of the region of Samaria or, more likely, to the city of Samaria, or Sebaste, the capital of the district itself. The topic of his preaching was ever the same, the one subject that can never be preached too often or too fervently: Christ, the Savior of the world. And this simple Gospel-preaching concerning the Messiah had its effect. It received a better reception than in the case of the Jews, to whose self-righteousness the Word of the cross was ever an offense. The multitudes that gathered about Philip attended carefully to the things that were spoken by Philip, and were of one mind. The combined evidence of the preaching which they heard, and of the signs which he performed as a proof of the Gospel's divine mission, was so powerful as to convince great numbers of them. For many demoniacs were freed from the evil spirits, the unclean devils that had taken possession of them, though the spirits protested with loud cries when they were driven out, and many paralytics and lame people were healed. Note the distinction made also here between the driving out of demons and the healing of sick people. Luke's description shows that he was well acquainted with the nature of both afflictions, and that he distinguished with a reason. The consequence of all these events was that there was great joy in that whole city. It was a time of blessing for body and soul. Philip did not belong to the tribe of the modern sensational preachers with the knack of electrifying the masses; none of their tricks were employed by him. It was the preaching of Christ that brought about the new condition, the miracles serving only for further confirmation.

The conversion of Simon: V. 9. **But there was a certain man, called Simon, which beforetime in the same city used sorcery, and bewitched the people of Samaria, giving out that he himself was some great one;** v. 10. **to whom they all gave heed, from the least to the greatest, saying, This**

25) Clarke, *Commentary*, 5, 738.

man is the great power of God. V. 11. And to him they had regard, because that of long time he had bewitched them with sorceries. V. 12. But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women. V. 13. Then Simon himself believed also; and when he was baptized, he continued with Philip, and wondered, beholding the miracles and signs which were done. Luke here adds a bit of local history which makes the victory of the Gospel stand out all the more strongly. A certain man there had been before these events had transpired in Samaria, whose name was Simon, and who had practised magical arts and had had the people of the city and of the region impressed to the point of stupefaction with his tricks and diabolical jugglery. He advertised himself, with the humility characteristic of the people of his type, as being something great, as possessing enchantments and powers beyond natural ability. He practised the charms and incantations so extensively employed in the Orient by both quacks and true sorcerers, that are able to perform feats that have the appearance of miracles, by the aid of the devil. So deeply impressed were the people that they regarded Simon as a manifestation of the divine power in human form. They therefore called him "Power of God which is called Great," one that was very prominently great and divine, possessing powers which are peculiar to God.[26] All this the Samaritans had done, because for a long time Simon had bewitched them with his magical tricks. They had put their own construction upon his acts, and they had believed his words. All this was changed with the coming of Philip. For when he preached the Gospel concerning the kingdom of God and of the name of Jesus Christ, when he brought to these benighted people the one message which could give them peace of mind and the blessed assurance of salvation, the Samaritans believed, faith in the Savior was wrought in their hearts, and they sought and received Baptism, the Sacrament which seals to both men and women the forgiveness of sins gained by Christ. Note: All magical tricks, even such as are performed with the aid of the devil, serve no beneficial purpose, being made only to excite idle curiosity. The miracles, on the other hand, both those that are narrated in Scriptures, and those which the Lord performs to this day, are in every case beneficent and worthy of the divine power. When Simon lost his former following so abruptly and thoroughly, he went to see and hear Philip, and was himself brought to faith. With the rest of the people, also, he was baptized and the promise of God thus sealed to him. There is no reason, from the account of Luke, to doubt the reality of Simon's conversion at this time. It was a very striking proof of the superior power and of the divinity of the Gospel concerning Jesus the Messiah. And Simon, he that had caused astonishment in others, was here himself almost overwhelmed with stupefaction when he became an interested spectator of the signs and of the great wonders which were performed before his eyes. Note: The devil may often, by God's permission, succeed in seducing men by means of his false miracles and tricks of jugglery, but whenever the power of God looms up by way of contrast, he and all his servants are brought to shame before the Mightier One.

Special gifts of the Holy Spirit: **V. 14. Now when the apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the Word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John, v. 15. who, when they were come down, prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Ghost v. 16. (for as yet He was fallen upon none of them; only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus). V. 17. Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost.** The apostles never undertook to exercise hierarchical powers and to assume a jurisdiction which they did not possess. But they had been commissioned by Christ as the teachers unto all nations and therefore were anxious to establish true unity of faith in all congregations, no matter where they might be established. It was an important point in the progress of Christianity that people outside of the Old Testament covenant should receive the Gospel and be added to the Church of Christ. When the apostles therefore received the news that Samaria had received the Word of God, that its people had professed allegiance to the Redeemer, they sent Peter and John as their personal representatives to find out the truth of the report and, if so, to establish the bonds of fraternal unity. The fact of the report being certified to, Peter and John not only extended to the Samaritan Church the hand of fellowship, but also transmitted to these new converts the wonderful gifts which they themselves had received. The Samaritans had been baptized, and therefore they were in full possession of the pardon of God, as well as of the Spirit which sanctifies, Mark 16, 16; Acts 2, 38. But now they were equipped with extraordinary gifts, with the power to perform miracles, to speak with strange tongues, to prophesy, and to give other peculiar evidences of the Spirit's omnipotence and divine majesty.[27] These extraordinary manifestations had not yet been imparted to these believers, although all the spiritual gifts were theirs by and through Baptism. But now these powers were transmitted to them by the laying on of hands, for it was a part of the Lord's plan in the early Church

26) Ramsay, *The Bearing of Recent Discovery*, 117. 118.

27) Luther, 12, 143.

to use miracles and signs to confirm the preaching of the Gospel. "The design of such gifts, and the way in which they were exercised in the congregation, are fully set forth by Paul in 1 Cor. 12—14. These gifts served a temporary purpose, until the facts, doctrine, commandments, and promises of the new covenant were committed to writing by inspired men, when the prophecies, tongues, and miraculous knowledge of individual teachers gave place to the written Word." 28)

The blasphemous demand of Simon: V. 18. **And when Simon saw that through laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Ghost was given, he offered them money,** v. 19. **saying, Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I lay hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost.** V. 20. **But Peter said unto him, Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money.** V. 21. **Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter; for thy heart is not right in the sight of God.** V. 22. **Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee.** V. 23. **For I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity.** V. 24. **Then answered Simon and said, Pray ye to the Lord for me that none of these things which ye have spoken come upon me.** V. 25. **And they, when they had testified and preached the Word of the Lord, returned to Jerusalem, and preached the Gospel in many villages of the Samaritans.** The faith of Simon the Magician had undoubtedly been real enough in the beginning, and he had not acted the hypocrite when he asked to be baptized. But here there were two factors which were too strong for the young plant in his heart. In the first place, he was not included in the number of those to whom the extraordinary communication of the Spirit's power was vouchsafed. And in the second place, his witnessing of this transaction had awakened the former love of money and influence over others in his heart. The combination of these facts was too strong for him, and he lost his faith. When he saw that Peter transmitted the miraculous gift of the Spirit by the laying on of hands, he brought forth money and offered it to the apostles, with the demand that they give him this power also, to impart the Holy Ghost by the imposition of hands. Simon was right in calling this gift a power, but he was wrong in thinking that it was a commodity of barter and sale. He may, in his former business, have purchased many a secret of sorcery from other masters, and therefore concluded that the same course might be followed in this instance also. But it was a blasphemous demand of covetousness, and his sin has ever since been known as simony. "This is simony, properly so called, if one buys or sells a spiritual office, possession, gift, or power for money, as Simon Magus did. When he saw that the Holy Ghost was given by the imposition of the hands of the apostles, he offered them money and said: Give me the power also, that, if I lay my hands upon some one, he receive the Holy Ghost; desiring thus that he might have the Holy Ghost, after having purchased Him for money, in his power, to have Him do what pleased him." 29) The infamous demand of Simon Magus aroused the impulsive resentment of Peter. Full of righteous indignation he calls out to him: Thy money with thee be into destruction! It is a violent expression of horror on the part of Peter that any one would even think of desecrating the most wonderful gift in the world by such blasphemous thoughts. That Simon should have gained the idea that a free gift of God might be purchased with money showed that he mistook entirely the source and meaning of the power which he desired. Peter therefore tells him that he has neither part nor lot in this matter, that he could not hope to share either the possession of the gift with the faithful, nor its ministry with any of the disciples. The demand of Simon put him entirely outside the pale of the Church; it showed that his heart was not sincere in his profession of Christianity, it could not stand without blame in the sight of God. There was only one course advisable under the circumstances, namely, that he repent of this wickedness, change his heart to a condition which would be well-pleasing to God. Incidentally, he should pray the Lord, with whom only there is forgiveness, that He might forgive him the blasphemous idea of his heart. The words of Peter do not make the matter of forgiveness after sincere repentance a doubtful thing, but he stresses the need for sincerity in regard to this grave offense. A mere lip repentance would not suffice before the eyes of the omniscient God. And the seriousness of the situation is further stressed when Peter says that he perceives Simon Magus to be in the intense, malignant, poisonous bitterness of gall and wormwood and held firmly in the bonds of unrighteousness. It seems to have been with Simon as in the story of the man that has turned out the unclean spirit, who returned with seven others worse than himself. Not the mincing of words, but the preaching of the Law in all its uncompromising severity was demanded by the situation, and Peter acted accordingly. Some effect this scathing speech of Peter certainly had, namely, that of thoroughly terrifying Simon, so far as the results of his sins were concerned. He asks the apostles to pray for him that none of the things of which Peter had spoken might strike him. His words indicate fear of the results of sin, but

28) McGarvey, *New Commentary on Acts*, 145.

29) Luther, 1, 1618.

no change of heart in true repentance. That is all the inspired record says of the matter, and although second century traditions have added much legendary material, this seems in no way trustworthy. The story as it stands contains some very earnest lessons. Simon Magus is a type of the temporary believers, of those that have turned to Christ in faith, but were not firmly established, and succumbed to the first temptation. The example of Peter shows how such persons must be dealt with when they are exposed. The wickedness and hypocrisy of their hearts must be rebuked with all severity in order that, by God's grace, true repentance may be worked in them for the salvation of their souls. After this disagreeable incident the apostles turned back to the real work for which they had come down. They bore witness to Christ in the most convincing manner; they spoke the Word of the Lord, thus performing the work of both testifying and teaching, according to the Lord's commission to them. And then, having accomplished the object of their journey, they started on their return to Jerusalem. But they made the trip in a leisurely fashion, which enabled them to preach the Gospel in many villages of the Samaritans outside of the capital of the district. Their hearts were filled with true missionary zeal, which permits no opportunity for spreading the Gospel to pass by. It was a time of cheerful harvest such as the Lord had predicted, John 4, 37. Such times of spiritual awakening and harvesting have been recorded since in more than one instance. In such cases it seems as though the Lord calls large masses of people simultaneously. The effect and the success of the preaching of the Gospel are in His hand, a fact of comfort to all workers in the vineyard of the Lord.

The Ethiopian Eunuch. Acts 8, 26—40.

The divine commission to Philip: V. 26. **And the angel of the Lord spake unto Philip, saying, Arise, and go toward the south unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza, which is desert.** V. 27. **And he arose and went; and, behold, a man of Ethiopia, an eunuch of great authority under Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, who had the charge of all her treasure, and had come to Jerusalem for to worship,** v. 28. **was returning, and, sitting in his chariot, read Esaias, the prophet.** Through the visit of Peter and John the congregation of Samaria had been so thoroughly established and furnished with special gifts of the Spirit that Philip could well be spared for other missionary work. And so an angel of the Lord, one of those special messengers whom the Lord makes use of in carrying out the work of His kingdom, spoke to Philip, whether in a dream by night or in a vision by day, is immaterial. He had a special order for the evangelist. He who had just preached the Gospel to hundreds and to thousands was to be sent a long way to open the Scriptures to one individual soul. Philip was to arise, be ready at once, and journey due south from Samaria down to and along the road which led down from Jerusalem (at an elevation of about 2,400 feet) to Gaza, formerly a city of the Philistines, only a few miles from the Mediterranean. There was a Roman road, built probably for military purposes, which passed from Jerusalem almost due southwest and led over Gaza down to Egypt. For a large part of the way this road led through desert places, comparatively uninhabited districts. The obedience of Philip was immediate and implicit; he did according to the word of the angel. By God's arrangement, Philip either struck the road or was traveling along the road designated by the angel when a chariot came along. In this vehicle sat an Ethiopian man, a eunuch, who was a powerful officer of queen Candace, being her minister of finances or secretary of the state treasury. Though he was a eunuch and as such debarred from actual membership in the Jewish congregation, Deut. 23, 1, he could very well have been a proselyte of the gate and admitted to the Court of the Gentiles to perform his acts of worship. He was in the service of the queen of the Ethiopians, the queen of Nubia, whose official title was Candace,[30]) and had made the long trip for the express purpose of attending to his religious duties. It is difficult to say whether he had come up in the season without festivals, or whether the fall of the year, with its Festival of New Year, Day of Atonement, and Feast of Tabernacles, had meanwhile come, the latter being very likely. In returning home, the eunuch was employing his time in the best possible manner. Sitting in his chariot, he was reading the book of the Prophet Isaiah, very probably aloud, after the Oriental fashion, v. 30, and trying incidentally to get the meaning of the text. In this he gives an example which might well be emulated in our days. The Christians of our days, in many instances, read the Bible neither at home nor anywhere else, whereas this heathen proselyte was not ashamed to read it on the public road. It was not the original Hebrew text which he was conning, but the so-called Septuagint, or Greek translation, which had been made in Egypt almost two centuries before.

The text from Isaiah: V. 29. **Then the Spirit said unto Philip, Go near and join thyself to this chariot.** V. 30. **And Philip ran thither to him, and heard him read the Prophet Esaias, and said, Understandest thou what thou readest?** V. 31. **And he said, How can I except some man should guide me? And he desired Philip that he would come up and sit with him.** V. 32. **The place of the Scripture which he read**

30) Barton, *Archeology and the Bible*, 33.

was this, He was led as a lamb to the slaughter; and like a lamb dumb before his shearer, so opened He not His mouth; v. 33. **in His humiliation His judgment was taken away; and who shall declare His generation? For His life is taken from the earth.** Philip had followed the command of the angel; he had gone to the place to which he was directed, and was ready for further directions. These were given him by the prompting of the Spirit telling him to stay near the chariot as it moved along, within earshot or easy hailing distance. And as Philip ran toward the chariot, he could hear the words which the eunuch was reading to himself, and recognize the passage from which they were taken. The question with which he introduced himself was not an impertinent form of address, as has been stated, but one calculated to draw out the religious position and conviction of the man: Dost thou really understand what thou readest? It is a question which all Bible-readers ought to keep in mind; for there is far too much superficial reading of mere words instead of the earnest attempt to get the connection and meaning of every passage. The answer was: How do you suppose I should be able to if no one shows me the way? This does not imply that the Bible cannot be understood without hierarchical interpretation, but simply shows that a beginner in the study of the Word, one that has not yet carefully compared prophecy and fulfilment, will do well to have the aid of some help in comparing parallel passages and in pointing out the connection. The few really dark passages in the Bible are due to our lack of adequate knowledge of the original tongues and similar reasons; but none of these passages concerns any assurance of the salvation of souls or any other fundamental doctrine. The eunuch now earnestly invited Philip to have a seat at his side in the chariot. The passage which was just then troubling the reader was the beautiful section from Is. 53, 7. 8. There it is said of the Messiah that He was led like a sheep to the slaughter, that, as a lamb before the shearer is voiceless, so He opened not His mouth. It was written of the great Lamb of God, in His ministry of taking away the sins of the world. In His humiliation His judgment was taken away: in His oppression, when the wrath of the Father had struck Him as the Substitute for all mankind, the full judgment was carried out upon Him, and thus we need no longer fear judgment and condemnation, their force was exhausted in the Christ. His generation who shall declare?: He has been exalted into heaven, and now, even according to His humanity, has no end of His days, has eternal glory in His possession; for His life is taken away from the earth: it was taken from Him suddenly, by the murderous death on the cross; but the result was eternal salvation, final glorification in the interest of His believers. This was the Gospel of the Old Testament, a beautiful and clear account of the Messiah's sacrifice, but hidden before the eyes of the eunuch, because he did not know the fulfilment.

The baptism of the eunuch: V. 34. **And the eunuch answered Philip and said, I pray thee, of whom speaketh the prophet this, of himself or of some other man?** V. 35. **Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus.** V. 36. **And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water; and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?** V. 37. **And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.** V. 38. **And he commanded the chariot to stand still; and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him.** V. 39. **And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip that the eunuch saw him no more; and he went on his way rejoicing.** V. 40. **But Philip was found at Azotus; and passing through, he preached in all the cities, till he came to Caesarea.** We may well imagine the scene: a fine autumn day, the comparatively uninhabited plain extending on either side, the driver of the chariot half-dozing over his lines, the two men poring over the sacred roll. Note that Luke refers to the contents of the passage of Scripture as of a fixed quantity, a book which was known by that name to all the Jews. Having read the passage in question together once more, the eunuch asked Philip whether the prophet was here speaking of himself or referring to some one else. His knowledge of prophecy and the teaching he had had did not enable him to decide this important point. And Philip, full of the joy of the missionary when he finds an eager inquirer after the truth, opened his mouth for a long discourse. He could hardly have found a more suitable text to expound his great topic, for his subject was Jesus and the wonderful message concerning Him. Beginning with the many clear and beautiful texts of the Old Testament, he had a fine opportunity of showing the fulfilment of prophecy in the case of Jesus of Nazareth. And he undoubtedly spoke also of the great commission of the Lord which He had entrusted to His disciples, "to teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost," Matt. 28, 19. And while Philip was still picturing the glories of the Christ in glowing colors, the chariot came near one of the small streams or pools which, even in the dry season, may contain some little water. And the eunuch, half in eagerness and half in fear, points to the water and asks whether there would be anything in the way of his being baptized. Philip thereupon put the question which is funda-

mental in every true formula for baptizing, saying that his wish may very well be granted if he believes with all his heart. And the eunuch, filled with the sweetness and beauty of the Gospel proclamation which he has just heard, utters his confession: I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God: a short, but comprehensive formula, amounting to a confession in the Triune God. The officer then commanded the chariot to halt, and both Philip and the eunuch went down to, or into, the water, where the latter was baptized, the method not being indicated, though it was probably either by pouring or by immersion. No weight attaches to the method or form of baptism, so long as water is used and applied with the words of institution. But when they came up out of the water, the Lord, the Spirit of the Lord, performed a miracle by suddenly removing Philip from the side of the eunuch and out of his sight. However, he was no longer dependent upon this teacher; he had heard the essential facts which enabled him henceforth to compare the Old Testament with the New, and therefore went his way rejoicing. The ancient tradition has it that the eunuch brought the glorious news of the Gospel to his countrymen, and thus became the founder of the Abyssinian Church. However true this report may be, it is certain that he, for his own person at least, had found his Savior. As for Philip, he was taken to, and then found at, Azotus, the Old Testament Ashdod, another former city of the Philistines. Beginning with this town, he leisurely journeyed up the coast of the Mediterranean, preaching the Gospel wherever he went, until he reached the city of Caesarea, which was about midway between the present towns of Jaffa and Haifa. Note: The exalted Christ fixes the course of the Gospel, whether it shall be preached in populous cities or in comparatively uninhabited places. Our task is to follow His hints and to be guided by the circumstances as He places them before us, for the end is the salvation of souls.

Summary. *Owing to the persecution of the congregation in Jerusalem, the Gospel is spread outside of the city, Philip founding the church at Samaria, which is established after a visit of Peter and John, while Philip is sent to teach the Ethiopian eunuch the Gospel and to baptize him.*

CHAPTER 9.

The Conversion and Early Labors of Paul.

Acts 9, 1—31.

Paul's continued enmity against the Church: **V. 1. And Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priest, v. 2. and desired of him letters to Damascus, to the synagogs, that if he found any of this way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem.** In marked contrast to the earnest labors of Philip in building up the Church of Christ we have here the hostile and destructive activities of Saul. With the passing of time the fire of his enmity did not abate, but was rather fanned to ever greater heat and fierceness. This state of mind had become so habitual with him that he actually breathed threats and murders against the disciples of the Lord. That was the atmosphere which he breathed, in which he lived. The threats alone were a base transgression of the Fifth Commandment, but he also actually followed them up with murder; he delivered all the disciples whom he could capture to prison and death. But his worst sin consisted in his blaspheming the name of the Lord by this opposition and persecution. Saul's greatest delight at that time would have been to destroy both Christ and all Christendom in one day, had he been able to do so, 1 Tim. 1, 13; Phil. 3, 6; Gal. 1, 13; 1 Cor. 15, 9.[31] In this frame of mind he went to the high priest and earnestly besought him for letters, credentials setting forth his authorization in the name of the Sanhedrin at Jerusalem. For Saul's attention had been called to the fact that Christian congregations were being established elsewhere, and the matter gave him no rest. Damascus had a large Jewish population and was the nearest foreign city of importance. To check the spread of the Gospel in this city would be a great victory for the Jews. The Sanhedrin at that time, even under Roman government, had great power and jurisdiction, both civil and criminal. Not only could it have arrests made by its own officers, but it could also deal with cases where the death penalty was not involved. And the authorities of Damascus were not liable to hinder such activities, as long as they were confined to the Jews. It was Saul's plan, therefore, to have his credentials addressed to all the synagogs of Damascus, in order that he might have full jurisdiction to act. Should he then find any persons, either men or women, "of this way," addicted to this new doctrine, as he supposed, he intended to bring them to Jerusalem in bonds. Note: The hostility of the vehement enemies of Christ in our days may not be able to show itself in just this way, but they make use of the flimsiest excuses and subterfuges to persecute the Church of Christ. Even as Saul, the Pharisee, sought to establish his own righteousness over against the righteousness of Jesus of Nazareth, and thus became the most dangerous enemy of Christ, so the modern Pharisees take

31) Luther, 12, 1152; 13a, 1093.

offense at the preaching of salvation by the blood of the crucified Christ.

The miraculous vision: V. 3. **And as he journeyed, he came near to Damascus; and suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven;** v. 4. **and he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me?** V. 5. **And he said, Who art Thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus, whom thou persecutest; it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks.** V. 6. **And he, trembling and astonished, said, Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do? And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do.** Saul, having readily obtained the letters which he desired, lost no time in leaving Jerusalem. To reach his destination, he had about 140 miles to travel in a general northeasterly direction. For Damascus was the ancient capital of the province of Syria, situated about seventy miles from the Mediterranean, from which it was separated by the Lebanon and Antilebanon ranges. The Abana River flowed through it, and the Pharpar ran a few miles south of its walls. Damascus is one of the oldest cities in the world, said to have been founded by Uz, the grandson of Shem, and known to Abraham, Gen. 15, 15. It has always been an important trade center and was also known for its manufactories. The journey, by either the caravan road through Samaria and Galilee, or by the Roman road over Jericho and through Perea and Decapolis, occupied some seven or eight days. One fact stands out with a certainty which cannot be denied, namely, that a state of mind less favorable for conversion than that of Saul when he started out on his mad expedition can hardly be imagined. He was in the very midst of Pharisaic darkness and unbelief, abhorring the very name of Christ and full of resentment and hatred toward those that confessed belief in this name. But the Lord's manner of dealing with even the most hopeless cases and obstinate enemies passes human understanding. For it was at midday of the last day of the trip, when the travelers had left the snow-capped peak of Mount Hermon behind them, and may have been able to see the city of Damascus in the distance before them, that suddenly, without warning, an extremely bright light from heaven shone round about Saul, so bright as to render him blind. Perceiving that a miracle was happening, he fell to the ground in helpless terror. In that light, and before darkness fell upon him, Saul saw Christ, the Crucified, 1 Cor. 9, 1. And when he had fallen, he heard and plainly understood a voice, which solemnly called to him: Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me? With fear and trembling, Saul asked: "Who art Thou, Lord?" either because he could not distinguish from the voice whether it was Stephen or some other victim speaking, or because he wanted to be certain that he was not beset by a hallucination. The Lord now fully revealed Himself to Saul as Jesus, whom he was persecuting by his present treatment and by his proposed measures against the believers in His name. Two facts were thus impressed upon the mind and heart of Saul, that the union between Christ and His Church is perfect and lasting, and that therefore the persecution of the believers was a persecution of Christ Himself. And the searching love of Jesus was immediately made manifest in His warning and pleading cry: It will be hard for thee to strike out against the goads, a figure taken from the driving of oxen by means of pointed sticks, against which they will sometimes attempt to kick. Here the hour of conversion was come. "For there is no heart so strong, though it were nothing but flint diamond, which could hold out and must not break." 32) The enemy was vanquished, because the Stronger had come over him and had changed his mind and heart; the Lord had revealed Himself to him, Gal. 1, 16. Saul now, full of trembling and astonishment, has only one purpose in mind, to do the will of his Lord, and asks what the Lord wants him to do. "In this way we should also learn to fit ourselves properly, confess our sins and desist from them, believe on Jesus Christ, and find comfort in His sufferings, and finally yield to the right obedience to God, in order that we may not again by disobedience fall from the great grace and into the wrath of God by an unrepentant life. That means to follow the example of Paul properly, which is written for our comfort and doctrine." 33) And then the Lord gave this new convert directions as to his behavior, namely, to arise and go into the city, where he would receive such information as he needed to direct his future course. "Here we should mark especially: Although God from heaven speaks with Paul, yet He does not want to annul the office of preaching, nor make this an extraordinary case; but He directs him into the city to the pulpit and preacher; there he should hear and learn what is to be learned. For God, our Lord, wants to establish something special for no one, but gives His Baptism and Gospel to the whole world, to one as well as to the other. There one may learn how to be saved, and not wait whether God will make something new and send us an angel from heaven. For it is His will that we go and hear the Gospel from those that preach it; there we should find it, and nowhere else." 34)

The end of the vision: V. 7. **And the men which journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing a voice, but seeing no man.** V. 8. **And Saul arose from the earth; and when his eyes were opened, he saw no**

32) Luther, quoted in Stoeckhardt, *Biblische Geschichte des Neuen Testaments*, 358.

33) Luther, 13a, 1101.

34) Luther, 13a, 1098.

man; but they led him by the hand, and brought him into Damascus. V. 9. **And he was three days without sight, and neither did eat nor drink.** Luke here for the first time mentions the companions of Saul, and describes their behavior. The men that accompanied him stood stupefied when the miracle occurred; for they heard the sound of the voice, but were unable to see any one. If we here add the witness of chap. 22, 6—11 and chap. 26, 13—18, in which passages the same event is described, we obtain the following picture. The great light from heaven was seen by all, but only upon Saul was its immediate effect that of throwing him to the ground. His companions stood stupefied for a few moments, as though frozen stiff with fear and apprehension, trying to realize the meaning of the vision. But after the first shock their limbs would no longer support them, and they also fell to the ground. And it was while they were lying down that the men heard the voice, the utterance of some one speaking, and Saul caught every word, but they did not hear definitely, nor could they understand who it was that spoke. And while the form of Jesus was clearly revealed to Saul in the midst of the light, the others saw nothing but the light. So much, then, these companions of Saul could testify to: that a great light appeared, that a voice was heard from the midst of it, that Saul became blind as a result of the miracle. Saul now arose from the earth, but when he tried to open his eyes, he found that he had lost his sight and could see nothing. It was necessary for his companions to take him by the hand and thus lead him into the city. And there his blindness continued for three days, during which time he neither ate nor drank. That was the result of the experience which he had gone through, by which he had been shaken in the innermost parts of his being. The conversion of a person is not always attended with such miracles as in the case of Saul, but it is always as miraculous. It is the Lord that conquers and vanquishes the sinners, His enemies. His holy Law strikes them to the ground, drives them to fear and despair. But He immediately follows with the comforting message of the Gospel, and then the wonder is performed. The resistance and enmity of the unregenerated heart is changed to a cordial acceptance of the love of God. That is the miracle of conversion.

The Lord commissions Ananias: V. 10. **And there was a certain disciple at Damascus, named Ananias; and to him said the Lord in a vision, Ananias. And he said, Behold, I am here, Lord.** V. 11. **And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the street which is called Straight, and enquire in the house of Judas for one called Saul, of Tarsus; for, behold, he prayeth,** v. 12. **and hath seen in a vision a man named Ananias coming in, and putting his hand on him that he might receive his sight.** A certain disciple there was at Damascus, one of those whose life and liberty Saul had set out to seek. His name was Ananias ("Jehovah is gracious"), more appropriate in this case than in that of his namesake, chap. 5. Whether he was a presbyter of the congregation at Damascus, as some commentators have suggested, cannot be determined. To him the Lord appeared in a vision, whether in a dream by night or in a condition of ecstasy by day, is not stated, and called him by name. Ananias, in immediate obedience, signified his readiness to hear the command of the Lord, for he recognized in the speaker his Lord, Jesus Christ, the Head of His Church. And the Lord at once gave him the necessary, explicit directions. He was to arise and to proceed to the street which bore the name Straight, conspicuous even to-day in a city full of crooked and curved streets, as having only a few slight angles in the length of a mile. It runs westward from the eastern gate into the heart of the city.[35]) On this street there lived a man by the name of Judas, and in his house Saul had found lodging. The Lord had directed Saul to go to the city, where he would be told what he should do. For a matter of three days the stricken man, in total darkness, had waited for the promised message. It is often a part of God's specific plan to lay inactivity upon some person, by sickness or by some other affliction. At such a time the heart has sufficient opportunity for earnest, prayerful communion with God. The new spiritual life of Saul was giving evidence of its presence in prayer; in prayer he was obtaining strength and patience to endure the test of the Lord to the end. And a vision had also been granted to him in which he had seen the very Ananias to whom the Lord was now speaking come in to him and restore his sight by the laying on of hands. The vision had been granted Saul partly to give him the assurance of healing, partly to make him see the hand of God in all the things which were befalling him.

The objection of Ananias answered: V. 13. **Then Ananias answered, Lord, I have heard by many of this man how much evil he hath done to Thy saints at Jerusalem;** v. 14. **and here he hath authority from the chief priests to bind all that call on Thy name.** V. 15. **But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way; for he is a chosen vessel unto Me to bear My name before the Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel;** v. 16. **for I will show him how great things he must suffer for My name's sake.** The obedience of Ananias was put to a severe test by the Lord's commission, when he heard the name Saul of Tarsus. He had heard from many people concerning this man, what and how many and how various evil things he had done to the Lord's saints in Jerusalem. Note the

35) Barton, *Archeology and the Bible*, 214, Fig. 266.

honoring name "saints," which is here given to the Christians for the first time, as such that have been cleansed and sanctified by the blood of Jesus. They are His saints, purchased and won by Him for His own; He is their Redeemer and their God. Ananias also had the definite knowledge that Saul here in Damascus had authority and power from the high priest at Jerusalem to bind and thus to arrest all those that called upon the name of Jesus as their Lord and Savior. Here is another honoring description of the believers, which also characterizes them exactly. They place their full and complete trust in their Savior, a fact which they show by their calling upon Him. But the Lord quickly silenced the objection of His servant by repeating His command: Go! And He took away all the apprehensive fears of Ananias by telling him that Saul was to be a vessel of His choosing, a vessel in which, as it were, the riches of God's mercy would be preserved for the use of many. For in this chosen vessel, Saul of Tarsus, God had determined that His name should be carried before Gentiles and before kings and before the children of Israel. The name of the Lord Jesus Christ is like a precious jewel, for whose bearing He had selected and prepared a fitting casket. The special mission of the man who became the Lord's apostle afterwards was here already indicated. His chief work was to be among the Gentiles, to those not belonging to the children of Abraham according to the flesh. But he was to testify also before kings and rulers, as the governors of Cyprus, of Achaia, of Judea. And lastly, his work was to include his brethren according to the flesh. The Lord here opened the door of the future wide before the eyes of Ananias, in order to work in him the proper willingness to execute the commission. But not only in witnessing for the Lord would this man Saul be found a fitting, choice vessel of the Lord, but Jesus intended also to let him experience suffering for His name's sake. These sufferings would come upon him as a part of the obligation of the Lord's vessel. No longer will he bring sufferings to others, but he would bend his back willingly to the load which the Lord knew to be the measure of his strength. That is the privilege of believers to this day, both to confess the name of the Lord and to endure the reproach of Christ.

The baptism of Saul: V. 17. **And Ananias went his way, and entered into the house; and putting his hands on him, said, Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent me that thou mightest receive thy sight and be filled with the Holy Ghost.** V. 18. **And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales; and he received sight forthwith, and arose, and was baptized.** V. 19. **And when he had received meat, he was strengthened. Then was Saul certain days with the disciples which were at Damascus.** The apprehensions of Ananias had been removed by the Lord's revelation. Leaving his own house, he entered into that which had been designated to him by the Lord. Finding Saul, he at once laid his hands upon him to transmit to him recovery from his blindness, and at the same time addressed him as a Christian brother. His conversion had changed the raging enemy and persecutor to one that was in true communion and union with all the believers. He explained the reason for his visit by stating that the Lord had sent him, the same Jesus that had revealed Himself to Saul as he was traveling along the way. He was now both to receive his sight and to be filled with the Holy Ghost. By his conversion, Saul had received the gift of the Holy Spirit, and by the present imposition of hands, besides regaining his eyesight, he was given a new and extraordinary measure of the light and power of the Spirit, as well as the power to perform miracles, thus being prepared for the ministry for which he had been chosen. As the immediate result of the laying on of hands, sight was restored to Saul; from his eyes there fell down a deposit, or skin, like scales, either a crust due to inflammation or a growth caused by the Lord for the time being. And the baptism that followed brought the reception of the Holy Ghost, as also his formal acceptance into the Christian Church. Thus, also, Saul received the assurance and the seal of the forgiveness of his sins, chap. 22, 16. Now the time of uncertainty and doubt was past, the crisis had safely been weathered. Saul now took food and strengthened himself. After the days of severe remorse he broke his fast. The Christians, contrary to popular opinion, are not given to foolish asceticism, but make use of the gifts of the Lord in a proper way. The young convert was now also introduced to the disciples, to the members of the congregation at Damascus; he openly joined their ranks and thus confessed his faith. Note: The excuse which is sometimes offered that people may be just as good Christians without belonging to the Church does not hold in the face of the example here narrated.

Saul preaches Christ: V. 20. **And straightway he preached Christ in the synagogs that He is the Son of God.** V. 21. **But all that heard him were amazed and said, Is not this he that destroyed them which called on this name in Jerusalem, and came hither for that intent, that he might bring them bound unto the chief priests?** V. 22. **But Saul increased the more in strength, and confounded the Jews which dwelt at Damascus, proving that this is very Christ.** Saul had, by the Word of the Lord through Ananias and probably also by direct command of God, received his commission as preacher and missionary. And he lost no time in entering upon his duties. Quickly, as soon as possible, he preached in the syna-

gogs, heralding the message, proclaiming Jesus that He is the Son of God. He proved to the assembled Jews that the same Jesus that had been put to death by them could be none else than the promised Messiah, the very Son of God, concerning whom Ps. 2, 7 spoke. That is the great message of the New Testament, the sum and substance of all preaching of the person and office of the Savior. The result was that all those that heard Saul speak were stupefied with astonishment, which they voiced in the excited inquiry: Is not this the man that destroyed, laid waste, in Jerusalem those that called upon this name, and has come here for the purpose of leading them bound to the high priests? The mission of Saul had become known among the Jews, probably through his companions or by message from Jerusalem, and his former hatred had been a matter of general knowledge. His complete change, therefore, was altogether inexplicable to his former companions. Meanwhile Saul was growing in spiritual and religious strength day by day, in his understanding of Scriptures and of their great central theme, and in his power to apply the import of the wonderful news to the situation before him. Whenever he had the opportunity, he argued his inexhaustible topic and confounded the Jews, literally, poured them together, mixed them up, making it impossible for them to stand up before his mighty exposition and demonstration that this man Jesus is the Christ. This truth he proved by demonstrating the agreement between the Messianic predictions and the historical facts in the life of Jesus, and he testified to it from the soundness and firmness of his conviction. The power of the Holy Spirit in his message, added to his confidence and joyfulness, could not fail to make a deep impression, even as it does to this day.

Saul in danger of his life: V. 23. **And after that many days were fulfilled, the Jews took counsel to kill him;** v. 24. **but their laying await was known of Saul. And they watched the gates day and night to kill him.** V. 25. **Then the disciples took him by night, and let him down by the wall in a basket.** "After many days were fulfilled," at the expiration of a longer period of time. Luke does not say where Saul stayed during this time, nor does he describe his labors, but it is probable that the journey to Arabia, Gal. 1, 17, took place at this time. Whether Saul was engaged in missionary labors, or whether the Lord was granting him a period of special preparation, we have no means of knowing. But having returned once more to Damascus, Saul was soon to learn that the amazement of his fellow-countrymen had worn off. The Jews planned together to kill him, to put him out of the way for proclaiming the Gospel. He experienced something of the hostile attitude and persecution which he had formerly shown to the disciples of Jesus. Saul found out about the plot to kill him and made plans to escape. The Jews, however, had laid their plans so well that they had also gained the cooperation of the ethnarch under King Aretas, 2 Cor. 11, 32, and they had guards at all the gates of the city, with orders that they should put Saul to death if he attempted an escape. Undoubtedly they hoped to have little difficulty in laying hold of him in the city, as soon as they thought the time would be ripe. In this emergency the disciples found a way to foil the pursuers. They found a house which was built next to the city wall, or even with a superstructure resting on the wall, and it was an easy matter to lower Saul from an opening in the wall, by means of a large basket, such as were used by hucksters to carry their wares. In this way the disciples of Damascus sent Saul away from the city and provided for his safety. This was about three years after his conversion, Gal. 1, 18.

Saul at Jerusalem: V. 26. **And when Saul was come to Jerusalem, he assayed to join himself to the disciples; but they were all afraid of him, and believed not that he was a disciple.** V. 27. **But Barnabas took him, and brought him to the apostles, and declared unto them how he had seen the Lord in the way, and that He had spoken to him, and how he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus.** V. 28. **And he was with them, coming in and going out at Jerusalem.** V. 29. **And he spake boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus, and disputed against the Grecians. But they went about to slay him,** v. 30. **which when the brethren knew, they brought him down to Caesarea, and sent him forth to Tarsus.** V. 31. **Then had the churches rest throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria, and were edified, and, walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied.** Three years before, Saul had left Jerusalem, an enemy and persecutor of the disciples of Christ. And now he returned to the city, himself persecuted and hunted by his former friends and companions. Just what feelings surged through his heart as he passed the place where the Lord had appeared to him, or the spot where the stoning of Stephen had taken place, may well be conjectured. But the crowning humiliation came to him in Jerusalem, in the treatment of the disciples. He tried to join himself to the members of the congregation, with the intimacy which was the rule among the disciples in those days. But his efforts were met with suspicion, since his former career was too well known. Very likely they feared that Saul was merely simulating interest and conviction for the sake of being admitted into the secrets of the congregation and of obtaining names of the prominent people connected with it, in order to pursue his old methods once more. In their distrust they felt that they needed the strongest kind of evidence for the sincerity, both of his con-

version and of the honesty of his motives in desiring to join them. It may often happen that a sin of earlier days, though performed in partial or total ignorance, may harm a person's standing in later years, in spite of the most sincere repentance. Fortunately, this distressing experience of Saul did not last too long; for Barnabas, the former Levite, chap. 4, 36, who may have been acquainted with Paul even from early days in Tarsus, now undertook to vouch for him. He took him to the apostles and narrated to them at length how the conversion of the former persecutor of the Church had taken place when the Lord Himself appeared to him and spoke to him on the way, and also that Saul had spoken the great truths of the Gospel boldly at Damascus. In the name of Jesus he had spoken so freely, and had thus received the same commission as had the apostles themselves. This introduction took place to Peter and James, Gal. 1, 19, the other apostles being absent from Jerusalem on matters pertaining to the Church. Barnabas having vouched for Saul, the latter was now recognized as a brother, and he went in and out among the congregation in Jerusalem; he had confidential intercourse with the apostles and with all the brethren daily. And very naturally Saul, also in Jerusalem, began to preach freely in the name of the Lord. The message of salvation whose glory and comfort he had experienced he felt constrained to bring to others, chap. 4, 20. But when he also spoke and disputed with the Hellenists, to whom he himself had belonged, perhaps in the same synagog that had attempted to argue against the wisdom of Stephen, chap. 6, 9, he found that they were deeply embittered against him as a deserter from their ranks. With this feeling prompting them, they undertook to kill him; they did not actually apply their hands to it, but they began to make arrangements to that effect. It was true, therefore, that the Hellenistic Jews would not accept Saul's testimony concerning Jesus, chap. 22, 17. The brethren found out about the intention of removing the brother whom they now highly esteemed, and foiled the evil purpose. They took Saul down to Caesarea on the Mediterranean, whence he had an opportunity to cross over to Asia Minor, to Tarsus in Cilicia, his home town. It seems to have been the opinion of the brethren that it would be best for Saul to wait in his own city until such a time as the Lord would assign some definite work to him. Here we leave Saul for a while. — Luke, in closing this section, appends the remark that all the congregations, the entire Church, since their fiercest, most zealous enemy had been vanquished, had rest, peace, and prosperity, had a fine opportunity of being established, internally and externally, throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria. The Church was edified, built up as a solid structure; its right to exist was fully vindicated; its members walked, conducted their entire lives, by or through the fear of the Lord, as a result of the faith which lived in their hearts; and they were filled with the comfort of the Holy Ghost, the promised help and sustenance of Jesus became a fact, and the result was seen also in the growing number of the disciples. It is the Lord that builds His Church, as well in the days of strife and oppression as in the days of peace and prosperity, and it is the comfort of His Spirit which makes true church-work possible, causing also the appearance of true, reverential piety in the life of the congregations.

Two Miracles Performed by Peter.

Acts 9, 32—43.

Peter at Lydda: V. 32. **And it came to pass, as Peter passed throughout all quarters, he came down also to the saints which dwelt at Lydda.** V. 33. **And there he found a certain man named Aeneas, which had kept his bed eight years, and was sick of the palsy.** V. 34. **And Peter said unto him, Aeneas, Jesus Christ maketh thee whole; arise and make thy bed. And he arose immediately.** V. 35. **And all that dwelt at Lydda and Saron saw him, and turned to the Lord.** It seems to have been the custom of the apostles to visit new sections of the field that were opened, new congregations that were established. Peter and John had done so in Samaria, Paul followed the same custom in his mission-work, and here we find Peter traveling throughout all quarters, throughout the sections of the provinces where congregations had lately been established. The purpose was evidently to establish and keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace. In this way, Peter also came down to the saints, to the members of the congregation, in and about Lydda, the ancient Lod, Neh. 7, 37, about two-thirds of the distance between Jerusalem and Joppa, in the beautiful valley of Sharon, some three hours from the seacoast. Here at Lydda Peter found a certain man, apparently not a member of the congregation, but one that undoubtedly had heard of its work, a Greek, or Hellenistic Jew, by the name of Aeneas. He was a paralytic and had suffered for eight years, being bedridden and unable to help himself. Note how carefully and exactly Luke, as a physician, describes the sickness. Peter spoke only a few words to this man, telling him that Jesus Christ healed him. At the same time he therefore commanded him to arise and to arrange his own pillows, to make his own bed, something which his paralyzed limbs had not permitted him to do for years. The miracle of healing was performed at once. Jesus, the exalted Christ, who now sits at the right hand of God, is everywhere near His congregation, also in all bodily needs. The miracle was so obvious that its effect was marked. Not only the people in and about Lydda, but also the inhabitants of the great valley or plain of

Sharon, which extended its fertile fields northward to Mount Carmel, saw the man that had been healed, and there followed a general conversion to the Christian faith as professed by Peter and by the congregation at Lydda. The people were convinced that the claims of Jesus as the Messiah must be well established if even His servants could perform such mighty deeds.

The miracle at Joppa: V. 36. **Now there was at Joppa a certain disciple named Tabitha, which by interpretation is called Dorcas; this woman was full of good works and alms-deeds which she did.** V. 37. **And it came to pass in those days that she was sick and died; whom when they had washed, they laid her in an upper chamber.** V. 38. **And forasmuch as Lydda was nigh to Joppa, and the disciples had heard that Peter was there, they sent unto him two men, desiring him that he would not delay to come to them.** V. 39. **Then Peter arose and went with them. When he was come, they brought him into the upper chamber; and all the widows stood by him weeping, and showing the coats and garments which Dorcas made while she was with them.** V. 40. **But Peter put them all forth, and kneeled down, and prayed; and, turning him to the body, said, Tabitha, arise. And she opened her eyes; and when she saw Peter, she sat up.** V. 41. **And he gave her his hand, and lifted her up, and, when he had called the saints and widows, presented her alive.** V. 42. **And it was known throughout all Joppa; and many believed in the Lord.** V. 43. **And it came to pass that he tarried many days in Joppa with one Simon, a tanner.** Peter may well have stayed at Lydda for some time, confirming the disciples and establishing the congregation. But he was suddenly called away to a house of mourning in Joppa, the seaport of Jerusalem. In this city there was a woman disciple, whose Aramaic name was Tabitha (splendor, beauty), given by Luke in the Greek form Dorcas (doe). She may have been known by both names. The preaching of the Gospel, probably through the efforts of Philip, who traveled through this country, chap. 8, 40, had had a wonderful effect in the case of this woman. She was full of, she abounded in, good works and in deeds of mercy, in the giving of alms which she practised. She gave evidence of the power of the Gospel which lived in her heart, with the love toward Christ and her neighbor breaking forth at all times. But this good woman, about this time, took sick and died, and the people that had witnessed and enjoyed her goodness made the first preparations for her burial by washing her and laying her out in the upper room of the house. Meanwhile it had occurred to some friend that Peter, according to the general report, was in Lydda, and the disciples of Joppa resolved to dispatch two men to him with the earnest entreaty: **Do not delay to come to us.** The urgency of the matter should be emphasized. Whether the disciples had any definite plan as to the probable bringing back of Dorcas to life, or whether they simply wished the presence of Peter to comfort them in their sorrow, is not stated. At any rate, Peter lost no time in accompanying them, and they had about three hours' time to discuss the situation with him as they traveled back to Joppa. Upon Peter's arrival they immediately took him up to the upper room where the deceased sister lay. If anything was to be done, hurry was imperatively demanded, since the climate makes a speedy burial necessary. As is usual upon such occasions, all the widows that had received any kindness at the hands of Dorcas, crowded around Peter, bitterly weeping and exhibiting to him the undergarments, or gowns, and the mantles that Dorcas had made while she was still alive with them. Such works of charity, though usually hidden before the eyes of men, are valued highly in the sight of God. The simple works of Christian service, done in all simplicity of heart, the care of the household, sewing, mending, cooking, and the little helps shown to neighbors, if done for the love of Christ, are recorded with God for a reward of merit in His day. Peter, first of all, removed all these people from the room; he wanted to be all alone in prayer with his heavenly Father and with his Lord Jesus Christ. Throwing himself upon his knees, he laid the matter before God in prayer, and then, turning to the dead body, commanded: "Tabitha, arise!" And by the power of the Lord the miracle was performed. The woman that had been dead opened her eyes and, seeing Peter, sat up. And he, assisting her to her feet, called the members of the congregation and especially the widows that were so deeply grieved, and presented her alive. Jesus Christ, the Prince of Life, that had returned Aeneas to perfect health, called also this woman back to life, in order that she might continue her works of mercy in their behalf. Life and death of all Christians is in the hands of their Lord. The miracle was soon spread forth throughout the city, and many believed on the Lord. The power necessary to bring a dead person back to life impressed them, and the Gospel won their hearts for Jesus. And Peter stayed in Joppa for some time, his presence at this time being especially fortunate. A man by the name of Simon, a tanner by trade, was his host. The trade was commonly detested by the Jews, but Peter was rapidly learning to discard the old prejudices and serve all men, become all things to all men.

Summary. *Saul, on his way to Damascus to persecute the disciples, is converted by an appearance of the Lord, and begins his work of testifying for Jesus, while Peter, in the course of his missionary journeys, heals a paralytic at Lydda and brings a dead woman back to life at Joppa.*

THE EARLY HISTORY OF PAUL'S LIFE.

Paul, the great missionary of the Gentiles, was born in Tarsus, the ancient, famous capital of Cilicia in Asia Minor, on the Cydnus River, twelve miles from the sea, in the midst of a productive plain, Acts 22, 3. The city was renowned for its culture as well as its learning, one historian placing it above even Athens and Alexandria in this respect. In this seat of Greek learning the boy, himself the son of a Pharisee and therefore a strict Jew, acquired a knowledge of the Greek language and of the manners and customs of the Greeks, which stood him in good stead in after-life. Incidentally, it should be noted that the inhabitants of Tarsus, having shown themselves friendly to the Romans at the time of Julius Caesar, were given the privileges of Roman citizens (or Paul's father may have obtained the right as a reward of merit), and it was on this account that Paul, a Roman citizen by birth, claimed the rights of such a citizen on different occasions, thus rendering the cause in which he was engaged considerable service. Paul was of pure Jewish descent, a Hebrew of the Hebrews, of the tribe of Benjamin, and descended from pious ancestors, Phil. 3, 4. 5; 2 Tim. 1, 3. The instruction in the Law of Moses which he received at home and in the local synagog was as thorough as that of any Jewish boy in Palestine.

According to Jewish custom some form of manual training was a necessary part of every boy's education. The young boy Saul also learned a trade, that of a tent-maker, Acts 18, 3; 20, 34. The goats' hair which was used for the manufacture of rude garments and tent cloth, was produced in great quantities in the mountains of Cilicia, whence the finished cloth acquired the name cilicium. This trade was of great service to Paul in some of the dark days of after-years, Acts 18, 3; 20, 34; 1 Thess. 2, 9. As soon as little Saul was ready for the great high school of the Jews at Jerusalem, he was sent there by his father, and was thus brought up at the feet of Gamaliel, one of the most learned doctors of the Jews, whose prudence and calmness made him conspicuous among the members of the Sanhedrin, Acts 22, 3. His advance in the religion of the Jews was beyond that of many of his own age, since he was more exceedingly zealous for the traditions of the fathers, Gal. 1, 14. He lived up to the demands of the Jewish Law and of all the traditions of the elders with all strictness, so that he could, in after-years, appeal to those that knew to testify to his having lived the life of a strict Pharisee, Acts 26, 4. 5; Phil. 3, 6.

Very likely Saul left Jerusalem before John the Baptist began his work, and was absent during the years of Christ's ministry; for there is no indication in Paul's writings of a personal knowledge of events in the life of Jesus. It seems that he returned to Jerusalem about the time that Stephen began his debates in the interest of the Christian religion and took part in at least one of these discussions as a member of the synagog of Cilicia. Paul's later life is largely described in the Book of Acts and in his epistles, and the probable facts as to his last years will be discussed in connection with some of his last letters.

CHAPTER 10.

Cornelius the Centurion. Acts 10, 1—48.

The vision of Cornelius: V. 1. **There was a certain man in Caesarea called Cornelius, a centurion of the band called the Italian band,** v. 2. **a devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God alway.** V. 3. **He saw in a vision, evidently about the ninth hour of the day, an angel of God coming in to him, and saying unto him, Cornelius.** V. 4. **And when he looked on him, he was afraid and said, What is it, Lord? And he said unto him, Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God.** V. 5. **And now send men to Joppa, and call for one Simon, whose surname is Peter;** v. 6. **he lodgeth with one Simon, a tanner, whose house is by the seaside; he shall tell thee what thou oughtest to do.** V. 7. **And when the angel which spake unto Cornelius was departed, he called two of his household servants, and a devout soldier of them that waited on him continually;** v. 8. **and when he had declared all these things unto them, he sent them to Joppa.** While Saul, in his own city of Tarsus, was awaiting the time when the Lord would assign definite work among the Gentiles to him, or, as some think, was bringing the Gospel to the province of Cilicia, God was Himself stirring the hearts of some few people outside of the chosen nation. A certain man there lived in Caesarea by the seaside, the residence of the Roman governors of Judea, whose name was Cornelius. This man was a heathen by birth, as his Latin name seems to indicate. His official position was that of centurion of the company known as the Italic cohort, the tenth part of a Roman legion, which was stationed at Caesarea. The Italic cohorts were made up of volunteer Roman citizens born in Italy, and are shown by history to have existed in several eastern provinces. Cornelius was not only good and generous, but devout, pious, a God-fearing proselyte, a man who with his family, and probably his servants as well, had come to know the true God, much like the centurion of Capernaum, Matt. 8, 5. From the Jews, among whom he lived for so many years, Cornelius had heard of the coming Messiah, by whose coming and work the true righteousness before God would be his; this faith had taken hold of his heart and gave sufficient evidence of its presence in his many alms and

in his continual prayers to God.[36] Thus Cornelius was not merely an upright, honorable man of the world, but a believer in the Messiah, whose coming he, however, with many of the devout Jews, put into the future, not knowing that all the prophecies had been fulfilled in and through Jesus of Nazareth. But the Lord knew the condition of his heart and determined to give him and his entire house the full revelation of the New Testament. Accordingly, God arranged it so that Cornelius, about the ninth hour of the day, about the time of the evening sacrifice in the Temple, one of the hours of prayer, saw in a vision distinctly, manifestly, plainly, making an illusion impossible, an angel of the Lord coming in to him with a message. The heavenly messenger, first of all, called him by name, in itself a distinction, Is. 43, 1. But Cornelius instinctively shrank back, as sinful men are liable to do in the presence of a sinless being. His eyes were fixed upon the angel and he was filled with fear, as he said, "What is it, Lord?" for he recognized the messenger from God. But the angel's calm words reassured him. His prayers had been heard by God, and his works of mercy had come to the attention of God; they were credited to him in the memory of the Lord. The eyes of God are ever watching those that fear Him, whose hearts trust in Him by faith, and whose hands are willing to serve Him. He hears their prayers and remembers all their works. But the angel now told Cornelius that he should send some men to Joppa as his messengers, to fetch one Simon, distinguished from other men of the same name by his surname Peter. His place of lodging was with Simon, the tanner, who lived near the sea, outside of the city proper, on account of the nature of his business. This Peter would be able and willing to give him such information as he needed at this time. For while Cornelius was a true believer according to Old Testament standards, cp. John 1, 47, he lacked the knowledge of the Messiah that had appeared, and this should be supplied by Peter. Note: Although the angel might well have given Cornelius a full understanding of the Gospel, the Lord does not commission him to that end, but directs the centurion to one of His preachers of salvation. Through His holy Word, as proclaimed by the mouth of men, God calls men to salvation.[37] No sooner had the angel delivered his message than Cornelius proceeded to act upon the command which he had received. Though it was now late in the afternoon, he summoned two of his own domestic servants and a soldier who, like himself, was devout and God-fearing, one who belonged to the smaller guard of sentries whom he could trust implicitly, since they were truly devoted to him. To these three messengers Cornelius explained the entire matter in all confidence, withholding nothing from them which might serve for the understanding of the situation, and then sent them off to Joppa, which was located almost due south of Caesarea, at a distance of some thirty miles. Note: The relation between Cornelius and those employed by him and under his jurisdiction, as here pictured, might serve as an example to all employers and servants alike. If such conditions of mutual respect and confidence, based upon the fear of the same God, obtain, there will hardly be a servant problem or a dissatisfaction of labor.

The vision of Peter: V. 9. **On the morrow, as they went on their journey, and drew nigh unto the city, Peter went up upon the housetop to pray about the sixth hour;** v. 10. **and he became very hungry, and would have eaten; but while they made ready, he fell into a trance,** v. 11. **and saw heaven opened, and a certain vessel descending unto him, as it had been a great sheet knit at the four corners, and let down to the earth,** v. 12. **wherein were all manner of four-footed beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air.** V. 13. **And there came a voice to him, Rise, Peter; kill, and eat.** V. 14. **But Peter said, Not so, Lord; for I have never eaten anything that is common or unclean.** V. 15. **And the voice spake unto him again the second time, What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common.** V. 16. **This was done thrice; and the vessel was received up again into heaven.** The journey from Caesarea to Joppa may well have taken some nine to ten hours, thus bringing the three messengers into the neighborhood of the southern seaport about noon of the next day. But it was necessary, meanwhile, for the Lord to prepare Peter for the coming visit, lest he draw back in horror at the thought of being the guest of a Gentile. While the men were pursuing their journey, walking their way, therefore, and nearing the city of Joppa, about noon, Peter went up to the flat roof of the house where he was lodging, for the purpose of praying, since this was one of the hours of prayer observed by the devout Jews. But while he was engaged in this service of worship, he became intensely hungry, unusually eager for food, for which reason he intended to have lunch, probably stating his wishes to that effect to the people of the house at once. But while they were preparing the meal downstairs, a trance, a condition of ecstasy, came upon Peter. Not that he was unconscious, but his mind and spirit were detached from ordinary thinking and feeling, and he was enabled to hear and see things which the normal person could not have perceived. In this condition he beheld the heaven opened and descending out of the opening a vessel, or container, shaped like a large sheet, whose four ends or corners were tied in order to hold the contents together, and to enable it to be lowered

36) Art. Smalcald. Mueller, 322.
37) Form. Conc. Mueller, 600.

down. In the container thus held before Peter's spiritualized eyes there were all kinds of four-footed animals and reptiles and fowls, the unclean mixed with the clean in a conglomerate mass, without regard to Levitical division or distinction. Cp. Lev. 11, 9; Deut. 14, 9. And at this moment a voice came to him inviting him to rise, to slaughter, and to eat. But the impetuous Peter, still held by the tradition of the legal distinctions concerning animal food, rejected the invitation with great emphasis: By no means, Lord, for never have I eaten anything common or unclean. At first blush he may have regarded the entire vision as a temptation to evil. But the voice rebuked him, correcting his position, by speaking to him again the second time: What God has rendered clean do not thou render profane. By the act of offering them to Peter, God had revoked the Levitical command, and cleansed the animals formerly regarded as unclean. Three times the Lord had this vision appear, three times the container was held before Peter, three times the invitation came to him, before the vessel was finally taken up to heaven again. By means of this vision God clearly indicated that the barrier between Jews and Gentiles had now been removed, that the Gentiles also should be admitted to the kingdom of God and of Christ. This lesson is necessary even to-day, when race prejudices sometimes seriously threaten to interfere with missionary efforts.

The arrival of the messengers: V. 17. **Now while Peter doubted in himself what this vision which he had seen should mean, behold, the men which were sent from Cornelius had made enquiry for Simon's house, and stood before the gate,** v. 18. **and called, and asked whether Simon, which was surnamed Peter, were lodged there.** V. 19. **While Peter thought on the vision, the Spirit said unto him, Behold, three men seek thee.** V. 20. **Arise therefore, and get thee down, and go with them, doubting nothing; for I have sent them.** V. 21. **Then Peter went down to the men which were sent unto him from Cornelius, and said, Behold, I am he whom ye seek; what is the cause wherefore ye are come?** V. 22. **And they said, Cornelius, the centurion, a just man, and one that feareth God, and of good report among all the nation of the Jews, was warned from God by an holy angel to send for thee into his house, and to hear words of thee.** V. 23a. **Then called he them in and lodged them.** The vision which God had sent to Peter troubled, perplexed him, it made him uneasy, uncertain as to what to do next. The general drift of the intended communication he observed, but its application was not clear to him. Did it mean only the abolishing of the ceremonial part of the Old Testament revelation, or was even more than this included? And to what special case did the Lord have reference? But these doubts and perplexities were quickly removed, for in the mean time the messengers of Cornelius had reached the city; they had made inquiry as to the location of the house to which they were directed; they had found the right place and were even now standing at the gate below. The vaulted passageway which, in Oriental houses, led from the street to the inner court was closed on the outside by a heavy folding gate with a small wicket kept by a porter. At this gate the messengers were standing, calling out, either to the porter or to some of the other servants in their inquiry, whether Simon, with the surname Peter, were lodging there. Peter, who knew nothing of all this commotion, was informed concerning it by the Spirit. While he was still pondering about the vision, trying to recognize the purpose of God clearly, the Spirit told him that the men were seeking him, and bade him arise, go down, and make the trip with the men, without any doubt or hesitation, since He, God Himself, had sent the men. Here Peter had the solution of the puzzling question. He was not to shrink back in horror from the idea of accompanying the strangers, but was to go willingly and gladly. Peter still did not know what special message the men were bringing, but he followed the bidding of the Spirit. Going down to the men, who seem still to have been standing at the gate or in the passageway, he informed them as to his identity, and inquired as to the reason for their presence. And the three faithful messengers made good use of the confidence which their master had placed in them, incidentally showing their love and respect for Cornelius. They refer to him as a just man, unblamable in his relations to his fellow-men according to Jewish standards, and also as a God-fearing man, one that had accepted the God of the Jews and no longer put his trust in idols. Moreover, he had a good report, was well spoken of by the entire people of the Jews; all men had the highest regard for his integrity. Of this master they report that he had been warned of God, that he had received a message from a holy angel as the messenger of the Lord, to fetch Peter into his house, in order to hear words from him. "Connecting this message, sent by the order of a 'holy angel,' with the vision, and with the command of the Spirit to go with the men, nothing doubting, Peter now in an instant sees that he is called by divine authority, through the angel, through the vision, through the Spirit, to do what he had always before thought sinful, to go into the house of a Gentile, and to speak to him the Word of the Lord. Nothing less than an unmistakable divine call could have induced him to do this; but now he has no alternative unless he would withstand God." 38) The first result of this clear grasp of the situation was that Peter invited the messengers in, made

38) McGarvey, *New Commentary on Acts*, 205.

them his guests, and provided proper lodging for them. Peter now understood that God was not only the God of the Jews, but of the Gentiles as well, since He wants all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. In the whole story the hand of the Lord is evident. And so the entire course of every person's life is in the hand of God, all circumstances being ordered by God, even the so-called chance happenings. And God ever renews evidence of the fact that He wants people to come near to the Word, and wants to bring the Word near to the people.

The meeting of Peter and Cornelius: V. 23b. **And on the morrow Peter went away with them, and certain brethren from Joppa accompanied him.** V. 24. **And the morrow after they entered into Caesarea. And Cornelius waited for them, and had called together his kinsmen and near friends.** V. 25. **And as Peter was coming in, Cornelius met him, and fell down at his feet, and worshiped him.** V. 26. **But Peter took him up, saying, Stand up; I myself also am a man.** V. 27. **And as he talked with him, he went in and found many that were come together.** V. 28. **And he said unto them, Ye know how that it is an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew to keep company, or come unto one of another nation; but God hath showed me that I should not call any man common or unclean.** V. 29. **Therefore came I unto you without gainsaying, as soon as I was sent for. I ask therefore for what intent ye have sent for me.** It was not possible for Peter to leave Joppa at once, principally because he wanted some of the brethren from Joppa to accompany him on this trip. But the next morning the messengers set out with Peter, and some of the members of the congregation at Joppa went with them. Since they did not travel quite so fast as the servants with the soldier had in coming down, they were on the road all day and did not reach Caesarea until the next morning. But Cornelius, versed in military matters, had figured out with considerable exactness when he might look for them. He was confidently expecting them on that morning, and had therefore called together his relatives and his intimate friends, such upon whose discretion he could depend, and who were probably of a like mind with him concerning the worship of the true God. The state of mind in which Cornelius found himself on this morning may be pictured from his behavior when Peter finally entered his house. Acting upon the idea, no doubt, that the servant and messenger of the Lord, whose very coming was directed by an angel, must be worthy of extraordinary reverence, he advanced to meet Peter and fell down at his feet to worship him, to honor God in him. But Peter wanted nothing of such worship. He lifted Cornelius to his feet, gently chiding him meanwhile, by bidding him get up, since he himself was only a man. Note: This plain statement of Peter ought to discourage every idea of saint worship; for if he refuses to accept such adoration while he could hear the prayers that might be directed to him, how much more must it be considered foolish and harmful to address prayers to him now that he is removed from the presence of the Christian congregation! Immediately after this greeting the two men started a conversation and, while they were conversing together, entered into the inner room, the atrium, where Peter found many people assembled, all waiting, in interested expectation, for the words which Peter was to speak to them. The apostle first of all addressed a few words to the assembly to make the situation clear; for they were very well aware how "unlawful," how much at variance with the Law as understood by the Jews, his behavior must be, since he, a Jew, was here coming to, and intermingling with, Gentiles, people of a foreign race, in any way becoming intimate with them. Note the tact of Peter in using the word "of foreign race" instead of the harsher "heathen." There was no express prohibition of such behavior by Moses, but the traditions of the rabbis carried the principle of separation to such an extreme. But Peter here declares, not only that God had told him, but that He had distinctly and unmistakably shown him, that he should not speak of nor call any person common and unclean. The men present in the house of Cornelius may not have been members of the Jewish Church by virtue of circumcision, but they belonged to the people for whose sake the Messiah had come, and were therefore entitled to the preaching of the Gospel. Knowing this, Peter had come to them without contradiction or resistance, in simple obedience to the word of the Lord, when they had sent for him. And now his question was for what purpose they had sent for him, what object they had in making him travel this distance and appear before them.

The explanation of Cornelius: V. 30. **And Cornelius said, Four days ago I was fasting until this hour; and at the ninth hour I prayed in my house, and, behold, a man stood before me in bright clothing** v. 31. **and said, Cornelius, thy prayer is heard, and thine alms are had in remembrance in the sight of God.** V. 32. **Send therefore to Joppa, and call hither Simon, whose surname is Peter; he is lodged in the house of one Simon, a tanner, by the seaside; who, when he cometh, shall speak unto thee.** V. 33. **Immediately therefore I sent to thee; and thou hast well done that thou art come. Now therefore are we all here present before God to hear all things that are commanded thee of God.** It was doubtless with deepest emotion that Peter entered into the door of a Gentile's house, and Cornelius was no less deeply moved at the evident hearing of his prayer by the Lord and by the prospect which was thereby opened up to

him. The two had probably agreed that it would be best for the sake of all those present to rehearse the connection of events once more, in order that the minds of all might be clear on the matter. Cornelius therefore repeats the story of the events leading up to the present moment: that four days ago, on the fourth day before, he had been engaged in prayer in his house, at the ninth hour; that a man had stood before him in a shining vestment, his humble description of the angel that had appeared to him; that this messenger had informed him of the hearing of his prayer and of the remembering of his alms before God (both his prayers and his alms had been sacrifices by which he had brought himself into God's remembrance); that he had commanded him to send to Joppa and call thence Simon with the surname Peter, who was lodging in the house of one Simon, a tanner, by the sea; that this Peter, having come, would speak to him, bring him a very important message. All these words of Cornelius, presenting a very vivid picture, were addressed as much to his relatives and friends as to Peter. But now he turns to the apostle with a characteristic, humble, beautiful statement: Immediately, at once, without delay, I sent to thee, and thou hast done well in coming; now we all here before God are present to hear all that thou hast been charged with by the Lord to proclaim to us. There are two points of deep significance in this statement: that the entire assembly was conscious of the presence of God, and that they were all convinced that it was a message from God which Peter was charged with proclaiming. Peter therefore surely spoke under ideal circumstances, and could expect that his audience would attend with the proper diligence and reverence.

The first part of Peter's sermon: V. 34. **Then Peter opened his mouth and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons;** v. 35. **but in every nation he that feareth Him and worketh righteousness is accepted with Him.** V. 36. **The Word which God sent unto the children of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ: (He is Lord of all:)** v. 37. **that Word, I say, ye know, which was published throughout all Judea, and began from Galilee, after the baptism which John preached;** v. 38. **how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power; who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with Him.** Under such ideal conditions, with an attentive, eager audience, it must have been an unusual pleasure to preach the Gospel. And Peter made the most of the occasion. Solemnly he began his address by stating that he now of a truth comprehended and understood fully that God is not a respecter of persons, literally, that He does not look upon the face of people. The outward face, form, and bearing of people do not influence the judgment of the Lord. In every nation of the world he that truly fears the Lord, that has his heart turned to Him in confident faith, and performs righteousness, shows by his entire manner of living that the fear of the Lord actuates him in all his doings, he is acceptable to God. This inclusive statement swept aside the confining bonds of the Mosaic covenant, and proved to be the keynote of the entire mission-work of the Church from that time forth. The reception of the salvation merited by Jesus Christ is no longer conditioned by nationality, but by the condition of the heart. The call to redemption is extended to all men, regardless of color, race, and language. After this great introductory, fundamental truth had been stated, Peter could launch forth into his favorite subject, the Gospel of Jesus Christ. He told his hearers that they already knew three facts. They knew the Word which had been sent to the children of Israel as a Gospel-message from God, bringing the good and glorious news of peace through Jesus Christ. The latter Peter, in a parenthesis, distinguishes from the ordinary prophets and apostles, the servants of the Word, as the Lord over all, thus declaring His deity. They furthermore knew, he tells them, the historical fact that the Word concerning Jesus was made known, published, by Himself, in His prophetical ministry, beginning from Galilee, after the baptism which John preached. And they finally knew about the person of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, namely, that God Himself anointed Him with the Holy Ghost and with power, who then traveled through the country doing good, performing miracles as the Benefactor of mankind, and healing all those that were kept in subjection by the devil, as the Lord and Master, before whom the spirits of darkness must bow; for God was with Him. These facts, with which his hearers were familiar in whole or in part, Peter impresses upon them as facts whose knowledge is necessary for salvation. Note that Peter emphasizes the deity of Jesus also in the last statement, which says that the two unchanged natures are united in the person of Christ.[39]

The last part of Peter's sermon: V. 39. **And we are witnesses of all things which He did both in the land of the Jews and in Jerusalem; whom they slew and hanged on a tree.** V. 40. **Him God raised up the third day, and showed Him openly,** v. 41. **not to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before of God, even to us, who did eat and drink with Him after He rose from the dead.** V. 42. **And He commanded us to preach unto the people, and to testify that it is He which was ordained of God to be the Judge of quick and dead.** V. 43. **To Him give all the prophets witness that through His name, whosoever believeth in Him, shall receive remission of sins. To**

39) Mueller, 654.

the facts which these men of Caesarea knew, and which they had always viewed in a somewhat detached, objective way, as concerning the Jews only, Peter now adds the weight of his personal testimony, together with that of the other apostles. Witnesses they are of all the things which Jesus did in the land of the Jews, in Palestine in general and in Jerusalem; witnesses they are also of the fact that the Jews became His murderers by suspending Him on the cross. But this same Jesus God had raised up from the dead, and had granted that He should be revealed as the living Christ. But this revelation was purposely not made to all the people; the personal prophetic ministry of Jesus was brought to a close with His death. Only to those men was the living Christ revealed, to those witnesses, that had been expressly chosen by God before, and who had both eaten and drunk with Christ after His resurrection from the dead. By being made apostles, these men were also delegated as witnesses, and they were making no haphazard, dark assertions as to something which they themselves knew only at second hand, but their testimony was based upon personal experience. In addition the apostles had received the charge to act as His heralds to all the people, in proclaming the Gospel as well as in bearing witness to the fact that Jesus has been ordained, definitely appointed, by God as the Judge of the living and of the dead, John 5, 22. Peter had now stated as a basic truth the fact that race and nationality debars no one from the blessings of God; he had reminded his hearers of the Gospel history which they had heard of and had viewed in a disinterested way; he had added his personal testimony as to the great facts in the working of salvation. And now he comes to the climax of his sermon, the application of the truths just proclaimed to his own present audience, placing full emphasis upon the fact that this wonderful message was not confined to the children of Israel, but concerned every one present in a most vital way. For to Jesus, he called out, all the prophets gave witness that every one that believes on Him receives forgiveness of sins through His name. Only by accepting the great truths of the Gospel as meant especially for them would they become partakers of the peace and joy which they contained for every believer. That is the summary of Gospel-preaching. "He could not have spoken more clearly than when he says: through His name, and adds: all that believe on Him. Therefore we receive forgiveness of sins through the name of Christ, that is, for Christ's sake, not for the sake of our merit or works, and that is done when we believe that our sins are forgiven for Christ's sake." [40] "This He wants preached and believed in all the world, and thereby sets aside all boasting of the Jews and of all work-saints [self-righteous men], that they should know that they cannot receive the grace of God through the Law and their own works, but can receive forgiveness of sins only in the name of this Christ by faith." [41]

The effect of the sermon: V. 44. **While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the Word.** V. 45. **And they of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost.** V. 46. **For they heard them speak with tongues and magnify God. Then answered Peter,** v. 47. **Can any man forbid water that these should not be baptized which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?** V. 48. **And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. Then prayed they him to tarry certain days.** The Lord, in this instance, had evidently planned to give an unusual demonstration of His power. For as Peter was still uttering the last impressive words of his discourse, the Holy Spirit fell upon, and filled, all those that were listening to the preaching of the Word. They had been believers in the coming Messiah before, in the Christ that was to bring redemption to the Jews; they were now believers in the Christ that had died for them on Calvary, whose full salvation had been earned for them. And the Holy Spirit was imparted to them in extraordinary measure, in such a way, in fact, as to cause the greatest astonishment in all the Jews that were present, in Peter as well as in the members of the congregation at Joppa. Here they had visible evidence of the fact that the Gentiles were indeed acceptable to the Lord, for the Spirit even gave them the gift of tongues, thus enabling them to praise and magnify the God of their salvation in languages which had been unknown to them before that day. Cp. chap. 11, 17. It was not mere jubilant ecstatic praising of God which Luke here records, but a repetition of the Pentecost miracle, although probably not on so great a scale. Peter, at any rate, was fully convinced. He voiced his feelings in the emphatic rhetorical question: Surely no one present would want to hinder the water that these men might not be baptized! There could be no possible reason for refusing to accept these men into the Christian Church in whose case the Lord had so plainly indicated that the Gentiles also should find admission into the kingdom of Christ. All difference between Jews and Gentiles has been removed by the death of Jesus. Full salvation and all the gifts of the Holy Ghost are ready for all the world, for all that will but accept these blessings with the hand of faith. And so Peter, who, in this instance, did not baptize himself, now gave the order, entrusting its execution probably to Philip the Evangelist, whose labors extended

40) *Apologia.* Mueller, 178.

41) Luther, 12, 494.

to this city, that they should be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ, and thus be sealed with all the heavenly blessings which the Savior has gained and appropriates through the water of Baptism. No wonder that Cornelius and his friends, after this experience, earnestly begged Peter to remain with them a little longer, to spend some time with them, at least a number of days. They were anxious to hear more of the wonderful testimony concerning Jesus the Savior.

Summary. *Peter, having been called to Caesarea by Cornelius and prepared for the visit by a special vision from heaven, preaches the Gospel to the Gentiles, who thereupon receive the Holy Ghost and are baptized.*

CHAPTER 11.

Peter's Defense against the Judaizing Brethren. Acts 11, 1—18.

The attack: V. 1. **And the apostles and brethren that were in Judea heard that the Gentiles had also received the Word of God.** V. 2. **And when Peter was come up to Jerusalem, they that were of the circumcision contended with him,** v. 3. **saying, Thou wentest in to men uncircumcised, and didst eat with them.** From the entire account of Luke in the Acts it is evident that the inspiration of the apostles pertained to their office of teaching only, and that they had no unusual powers of penetration and enlightenment otherwise. Thus the apostles, together with the other members of the congregation in Jerusalem, knew nothing of Saul's change of heart and therefore mistrusted him, chap. 9, 26. And here the apostles as well as the brethren in Judea labored under the handicap of a foolish and uncharitable prejudice. The report came to them that the Gentiles, by the ministry of Peter, had received the Word of the Lord. It was a matter, not of joyful astonishment, but of serious apprehension to them. When Peter, therefore, came up to Jerusalem, returning from the lowlands of Caesarea and the Plain of Sharon, those of the circumcision, not the Jews as distinguished from the Gentiles, but the strict Judaizing Christians of Jerusalem, probably such as had been priests or had belonged to the Pharisees, contended or disputed with him, they reproached him with the fact that he had entered, on terms of equal footing and intimacy, into the home of uncircumcised men, of heathen people, and had even eaten with them, the implication being that he might easily have partaken of food which was unclean to Jews and thus have defiled himself. That the Gospel should be preached to the Gentiles also, that such as did not belong to the race of the Jews should be accepted in the kingdom of the Messiah, was against all usage and feeling of the Jewish Christians. The fact that the prophets, not once, but often, had prophesied of the entry of the Gentiles into the kingdom of Christ, Is. 60, 3; 49, 6, seems to have escaped their minds; they had not understood these passages properly, they had to learn gradually. Note: There are many verses, passages, and sections in Scriptures which even believing Christians cannot grasp and understand at once. Even after Christ has been accepted, the enlightenment proceeds very slowly. If the Christians, however, will but continue to search, God will, step by step, lead them more deeply into the knowledge of the truth. And thus even such passages as are offensive at first reading will gradually receive their proper setting in relation to the Bible as a whole. Only we must make all parts of the revelation of God serve that one great fact, the justification of all sinners through faith in Christ Jesus, then the arrangement and the relative importance of the various parts of Scripture will follow as a matter of course.

The rehearsal of Peter: V. 4. **But Peter rehearsed the matter from the beginning, and expounded it by order unto them, saying,** v. 5. **I was in the city of Joppa praying; and in a trance I saw a vision, a certain vessel descend as it had been a great sheet, let down from heaven by four corners; and it came even to me;** v. 6. **upon the which when I had fastened mine eyes, I considered, and saw four-footed beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air.** V. 7. **And I heard a voice saying unto me, Arise, Peter, slay and eat.** V. 8. **But I said, Not so, Lord; for nothing common or unclean hath at any time entered into my mouth.** V. 9. **But the voice answered me again from heaven, What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common.** V. 10. **And this was done three times; and all were drawn up again into heaven.** V. 11. **And, behold, immediately there were three men already come unto the house where I was, sent from Caesarea unto me.** V. 12. **And the Spirit bade me go with them, nothing doubting. Moreover, these six brethren accompanied me, and we entered into the man's house;** v. 13. **and he showed us how he had seen an angel in his house, which stood and said unto him, Send men to Joppa, and call for Simon, whose surname is Peter,** v. 14. **who shall tell thee words whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved.** V. 15. **And as I began to speak, the Holy Ghost fell on them as on us at the beginning.** Instead of launching forth in cleverly worded arguments to defend his action,

Peter believes it best to let the facts speak for themselves, for which reason he gives them in the form of a simple recital, presenting them to the critics in order, just as they occurred, and as they have been narrated in chapter 10. Peter first told them about the peculiar vision which he had had in Joppa, when he had been in a state of ecstasy, when the container in the form of a large sheet, tied together at the four corners, was lowered out of heaven. He emphasizes that he looked very closely, and that there was no question of an illusion. He had surely seen in the container various quadrupeds and animals and reptiles of the earth and birds of heaven. He had plainly heard the voice telling him to arise, to slaughter, and to eat. He had objected very emphatically on the ground of his always having strictly observed the injunction governing unclean foods. But the voice had sounded the second time, bidding him not to regard as common what God Himself had cleansed. Three times the same thing had happened before the container had been drawn up into heaven again. And, behold, at that very moment three men had stood below, having been sent from Caesarea to fetch him, and the Holy Ghost had told him to accompany them without doubt or hesitation. They had then gone with him, and also brethren from Joppa, whose number Peter here states to have been six; these six, having returned with him to Jerusalem, could substantiate his words. They had entered into the house of the man who had sent the messengers, who had given them an account of his having seen an angel standing in his house and speaking to him. The command of this angel he had followed in sending to Joppa and fetching Simon with the surname Peter, who would speak words to him whereby he would be saved and his house. These last words, not found in the other accounts, anticipate a summary of Peter's discourse in showing to the assembly the fulfilment of the Old Testament prophecies and of New Testament preaching in Christ, the Savior of all men. Peter finally tells of the effect which his words had had upon his hearers. Before he had finished his discourse and brought out all that he might have said on that topic, which is inexhaustible, the Holy Ghost had fallen on the Gentiles in the same manner as He had been imparted to themselves in the beginning. The argument of Peter therefore was, that after seeing the vision, hearing the voice, and receiving the order of the Spirit to go with the men, he could not have done otherwise than obey and enter into the house of the Gentile at Caesarea. And the fact that the Holy Ghost had been poured out on these Gentiles was a further proof for the Lord's acceptance of the Gentiles.

The conclusion of Peter: V. 16. **Then remembered I the word of the Lord how that He said, John indeed baptized with water, but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost.** V. 17. **Forasmuch, then, as God gave them the like gift as He did unto us, who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, what was I that I could withstand God?** V. 18. **When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life.** Peter himself, as he here reminds his critics, had had serious scruples about the entire matter; but the succession of events could not have been the result of chance happening. And his last doubts were removed as he, at the great climax, beheld the working of the Holy Ghost in just the same way as he himself had experienced it on the great Pentecost. He had remembered the word of the Lord, the saying in which He had given the promise: John indeed baptized with water, but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost, chap. 1, 5. Peter does not selfishly limit this promise to the inner circle of the disciples, nor to the Jews alone, but wants it applied now wherever the evidence shows it as finding its application. Since God now gave the very same gift to them as He had given to the apostles, not on the basis of circumcision or uncircumcision, but on the basis of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was Peter and how could he have summoned power to hinder God? How would he have been able to withstand God, even if he had persisted in his scruples and doubts? It is the living God that directs and governs His Christian Church, showing the way in which His servants should walk. He Himself makes a pathway for His Word, that it may grow and bear fruit in abundance. And this fact the Christians at Jerusalem were now obliged to acknowledge. They held their peace, they were quiet and satisfied; they had no more objections to offer. They were rather constrained to give continuous glory and praise to God in confessing: So, then, also to the Gentiles God has granted repentance unto life. So the critics not only tacitly withdrew all that they had said in reproach of Peter, but also proclaimed the praises of God with enthusiasm. They were satisfied at once, and they continued their thanks and praises to God. Repentance, followed by faith in Christ, is the way to eternal life, God's free gift. And all Christians will properly rejoice if God grants many sinners repentance unto life. It is unfortunate that this happy state of affairs did not continue, chap. 15, 5.

The Establishment of the Congregation at Antioch. Acts 11, 19—30.

The founding of the congregation: V. 19. **Now they which were scattered abroad upon the persecution that arose about Stephen traveled as far as Phenice and Cyprus and Antioch, preaching the Word to none but unto the Jews only.** V. 20. **And some of them were men of Cyprus and Cyrene, which, when they were come to**

Antioch, spake unto the Grecians, preaching the Lord Jesus. V. 21. **And the hand of the Lord was with them; and a great number believed and turned unto the Lord.** Luke here once more refers to the scattering of the disciples which followed the execution of Stephen, chap. 8, 1. They were dispersed on account of the tribulation of the persecution which happened about Stephen, and in which the members of the congregation in general were involved. Some of the disciples at that time journeyed through the country to Phenicia, the country north of Galilee, along the Mediterranean Sea, whose ancient capitals had been Tyre and Sidon. Others crossed over to the island of Cyprus, which is located in the eastern part of the Mediterranean. And still others traveled up to Antioch, a city in Northern Syria, on the Orontes. It was a beautiful city and an important trade center through its harbor Seleucia, famous for its art and literature, but infamous for its luxury and the attendant vices. "The warmth of the climate disposed the natives to the most intemperate enjoyment of tranquillity and opulence; and the lively licentiousness of the Greeks was blended with the hereditary softness of the Syrians. Fashion was the only law, pleasure the only pursuit, and the splendor of dress and furniture was the only distinction of the citizens of Antioch. The arts of luxury were honored; the serious and manly virtues were the subject of ridicule; and the contempt for female modesty and reverend age announced the universal corruption of the capital of the East." 42) In visiting these various countries and their cities, the disciples at first confined their preaching to the Jews. They were all laboring under the handicap of the same prejudice as the believers at Jerusalem. But some of these men hailed from the island of Cyprus and from the province of Cyrenaica, in Northern Africa. As Hellenistic Jews they were, from the start, more liberal in their views and in their practise than the Jews of Judea. These men therefore made it a point and habit to speak the Word also to the Greeks, to the Gentiles of Antioch, preaching the glorious Gospel of Jesus Christ. This was acting according to the correct conception of the universality of the Christian religion. Peter's work in Caesarea had opened the way, but the work in Antioch was the first vigorous invasion of the Gentile world by the forces of the Lord's army. The Lord immediately gave evidence of His complete sanction and satisfaction, for His hand was with these men, His power accompanied their efforts, and a great number of the Greeks by faith turned to the Lord. Note: The Gospel of Jesus Christ is the means of kindling faith in the hearts of men. Through the Gospel faith is engendered; every one that believes, by that token is converted. But it is the hand, the power of the Lord, which works repentance and faith by the preaching of the Word, even when this is done through the mouth of ordinary disciples, men and women that confess the conviction of their heart.

Barnabas in Antioch and Tarsus: V. 22. **Then tidings of these things came unto the ears of the church which was in Jerusalem; and they sent forth Barnabas that he should go as far as Antioch,** v. 23. **who, when he came, and had seen the grace of God, was glad, and exhorted them all that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord.** V. 24. **For he was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith; and much people was added unto the Lord.** V. 25. **Then departed Barnabas to Tarsus for to seek Saul;** v. 26. **and when he had found him, he brought him unto Antioch. And it came to pass that a whole year they assembled themselves with the church, and taught much people. And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch.** Jerusalem, being the headquarters of the apostles, was still considered the capital city of Christendom. But proclamation of the unity of faith, so far as the believers of Samaria were concerned, had already been made, chap. 8, 14—17. When therefore the news reached Jerusalem and was brought to the attention of the congregation, the brethren formally delegated Barnabas to go down to Antioch. If the report was based upon facts, he was to establish fraternal relations with the disciples in this great metropolis also. Barnabas made the trip, came to the end of his journey, and was more than repaid. He saw the grace of God; he was fully convinced by the many evidences of the working of God's grace on every hand; he could not but acknowledge this fact with great joy and thanksgiving. And as a true son of comfort and exhortation he encouraged and admonished all the brethren to abide unwaveringly with the Lord, to cling to Him with full devotion of heart. The benefits and blessings of faith will come only to him that remains steadfast in his faith. And that is one of the purposes of the Gospel, to keep the believers in their faith. This preaching and admonishing of Barnabas made all the more impression, since he himself was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith. His preaching and exhorting was not like saying a lesson by rote, but it flowed out of the depth of his conviction of faith and the power of the Holy Ghost, who lived in him. It is not absolutely essential for the proclamation of the Word, but it is not without influence upon the force and vividness of presentation, that the preacher have the full conviction of the truth of Scriptures and the great Gospel-facts. In Antioch the effect was immediate and wonderful: a great multitude was turned to the Lord. With the establishment of the congregation now assured and the work growing in scope

42) Gibbon, *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, Chapter XXIV.

every day, Barnabas thought of his friend Saul, who was only a short distance from Antioch, at Tarsus, and who, as Barnabas knew, was destined for work among the Gentiles. So Barnabas made the trip across the sea to Tarsus to look up Saul, and finding him, he led him to Antioch. For a whole year these two men now worked together in the church at Antioch, with its hundreds and thousands of souls in need of salvation. "The united labors of two such men for a whole year, in a community to which the Gospel had already been favorably introduced, could not fail of great results; and the ultimate results were far beyond any hope which they could then have entertained; for they were now erecting, as it were, the second capital of the Christian world, whence were sent forth, not long afterward, the most fruitful missions of the apostolic age." 43) Here in Antioch also a great honor came to the disciples, for here, for the first time, they were called Christians. The heathen applied this name to the believers because they professed faith in Christ. Ever since, it has been the name which the believers have deemed the greatest honor to bear. Compare chap. 26, 28; 1 Pet. 4, 16.

Barnabas and Saul sent on a charitable mission: V. 27. **And in these days came prophets from Jerusalem unto Antioch.** V. 28. **And there stood up one of them, named Agabus, and signified by the Spirit that there should be great dearth throughout all the world; which came to pass in the days of Claudius Caesar.** V. 29. **Then the disciples, every man according to his ability, determined to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judea;** v. 30. **which also they did, and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul.** "In these days," the days of the first love, when the fires of zeal for the Lord and of love for the brethren were still burning high, there were also extraordinary gifts of the Spirit to be found in the congregations. Fraternal relations with the congregation at Jerusalem having been established, there came down from that city to Antioch some prophets, men that had received the special gift of being able to foretell the future. One of these prophets, a man by the name of Agabus, by the power of the Spirit indicated that a great famine was destined to come over the whole world. This prediction, as Luke notes, was fulfilled in the reign of the Emperor Claudius. As all the secular historians of note, Suetonius, Dion Cassius, Tacitus, and also Eusebius, bear witness, a severe famine at that time struck the entire civilized world, notably the countries along the Mediterranean. But now the love of Christ which lived in the Christians by faith became manifest. Every one of the disciples, according to his individual ability, pledged himself to send, in proportion to his means, for the service of relief to those brethren in the faith that lived in Judea. Since Antioch was a prosperous city, the chances are that many of the Christians living there partook of this prosperity in one form or the other, and were therefore in a position to give material aid to the brethren that were less fortunately situated. When therefore the need arose, the congregation at Antioch sent aid, very likely in the form of money, to the elders at Jerusalem by the hand of Barnabas and Saul. The elders, or presbyters, included all the officers of the congregation, both those that labored in the Word and doctrine, and those that did the work of deacons. The apostles were teachers extraordinary, not only of the congregation at Jerusalem, but of the entire Church. The example of the Christians of Antioch may well serve for emulation at all times. Individual Christians and entire congregations should have not only their own needs in mind, but have regard also to those of others, and remember especially such as have served them with spiritual gifts and blessings, in the preaching of the Gospel.

Summary. *Peter explains and defends his action at Caesarea over against the scruples of Judaizing critics, the congregation at Antioch is founded by some of the dispersed disciples and established by Barnabas, later with the aid of Saul.*

43) McGarvey, *New Commentary on Acts*, 227.

CHAPTER 12.

Herod Persecutes the Church at Jerusalem and is Punished by God. Acts 12, 1—25.

James beheaded, Peter imprisoned: V. 1. **Now about that time Herod the king stretched forth his hands to vex certain of the Church.** V. 2. **And he killed James, the brother of John, with the sword.** V. 3. **And because he saw it pleased the Jews, he proceeded further to take Peter also. (Then were the days of unleavened bread.)** V. 4. **And when he had apprehended him, he put him in prison, and delivered him to four quaternions of soldiers to keep him, intending after Easter to bring him forth to the people.** V. 5. **Peter, therefore, was kept in prison; but prayer was made without ceasing of the Church unto God for him.** At that time, at the time when Barnabas and Saul were sent on their embassy of charity, very probably in the year 45 or early in 46 A. D. Since the year 41 Herod Agrippa I, a grandson of Herod the Great, occupied the entire country which had formerly been governed by his grandfather, with the title of king, under Roman supremacy. His power exceeded that of

an ordinary governor, and he took good care to maintain his standing by a proper attitude of flattering deference to the emperor. He had risen to his present station by a gradual promotion, having been given first the tetrarchy of Philip (Batanea, Trachonitis, and Auranitis), a little later the tetrarchy of Lysanias, with the title of king, soon afterward the tetrarchy of Herod Antipas (Galilee and Perea), and finally Samaria and Judea. Without any special occasion, apparently merely for the sake of showing his tyrant's power, this Herod let his heavy hand strike certain members of the church at Jerusalem, to treat them badly, to torture and vex them. First of all he killed, deliberately murdered, James, the brother of John, with the sword. Luke purposely does not use a word to designate an execution, even with some show of right, but he applies the proper, fitting word: murder. This James the Greater, the son of Zebedee, must be distinguished from James the Less, the son of Alphaeus. The prediction of the Lord, Matt. 20, 23, was here fulfilled: James, the first martyr from the ranks of the apostles, drank of the Lord's cup, and was baptized with His baptism. This cruel and absolutely unjustified act of the king must have been the cause of great grief to the congregation at Jerusalem, removing, as it did, one of the foremost teachers of the young Church. The fires of persecution had died down to a few smoldering embers, but the action of Herod fanned them into new flame; the Jews, inveterate enemies of the Cross, were pleased with the removal of a leader of the hated sect; they found the action in total accord with their wishes. Herod, therefore, who prided himself upon his Pharisaic piety, added a second unjustified act, that of taking Peter captive, of arresting him without reason or charge, simply because it suited his fancy. Since just at that time, however, the Festival of Unleavened Bread was being celebrated, Herod, eager to show his zeal for Jewish religious customs by all means, had Peter arrested and placed into prison, his intention being to arraign him in the presence of the people after the days of the Passover Festival. The names of the feast are here interchanged, since they were applied indiscriminately. To be sure that his victim would not escape, Herod took unusual precautions, delivering him to four quaternions of soldiers, four soldiers for each of the four watches of the night, for safe-keeping. The Roman custom was probably followed, according to which the prisoner was chained to two guards in the cell, while two watched outside. With great numbers of people in Jerusalem for the festival, Herod hoped to gain further popularity by these measures, but especially by the final condemnation of the apostle in the presence of the people. He did not realize that by his action he was pitting his puny strength against the power of Almighty God and of the exalted Christ, a fact which Luke brings out by the contrast: Now Peter indeed was guarded in the prison, but prayer was made without ceasing by the congregation to God on his account. It is a sad fact that the might of prayer is not realized sufficiently in our days. If the congregations individually and collectively would but make use of prayer, unceasing, importunate prayer, the success of a great many enterprises would be a foregone conclusion. Note that the prayer of the Christians was made in behalf of Peter, very likely not exclusively for his release, though they knew that this was an easy matter for the Lord, but for strength and fortitude to bear persecution and martyrdom, if need be, for the sake of his Lord.

The miraculous deliverance: V. 6. **And when Herod would have brought him forth, the same night Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains; and the keepers before the door kept the prison.** V. 7. **And, behold, the angel of the Lord came upon him, and a light shined in the prison; and he smote Peter on the side, and raised him up, saying, Arise up quickly. And his chains fell off from his hands.** V. 8. **And the angel said unto him, Gird thyself, and bind on thy sandals. And so he did. And he saith unto him, Cast thy garment about thee and follow me.** V. 9. **And he went out and followed him, and wist not that it was true which was done by the angel, but thought he saw a vision.** V. 10. **When they were past the first and the second ward, they came unto the iron gate that leadeth unto the city, which opened to them of his own accord; and they went out, and passed on through one street; and forthwith the angel departed from him.** In the mean time, while the tyrant Herod was anticipating new triumphs, and the members of the congregation were making prayer unceasing for Peter, the last day of the festival was brought to a close. And that very night, the night before Herod intended to produce his prisoner before the people to be put to death in their presence, extraordinary precautions were taken lest Peter escape. But Peter seemed little concerned about the events of the next day. He was sleeping between two soldiers delegated for that purpose, fastened to them with two chains, probably so that he was bound on either hand to each of the soldiers, "the two chains being used perhaps for greater security on account of the former escape," chap. 5, 19. In addition to this, sentries before the doors guarded the prison, to forestall any attempt at deliverance from without. But the Lord cannot be hindered and deterred in His plans by such flimsy precautions. The angel of the Lord, whose coming neither guards nor locked doors can prevent, suddenly appeared, standing by the side of Peter. Incidentally, a light shone in the cell, for it was needed in the dense darkness of the

inner prison. It was necessary for the angel to give Peter a sharp blow on the side to rouse him from his deep sleep, for so completely did the apostle place his trust for the coming day in the Lord that he rested and slept as soundly as ever in the quietness of his own home, Ps. 127, 2. Having roused Peter, the angel raised him up, bidding him, at the same time, to get up in haste. This was made possible, at the same moment, by the fact that the chains fell from his hands. But Peter was still in a half-dreamy, dazed state, not realizing what was happening, and the angel was obliged to give him directions. He was to fasten his girdle about his tunic and lace up his sandals. Peter automatically obeyed. He was to put on his thick upper mantle, throwing it around him before going out into the cold night. And Peter, in the same detached, automatic manner, followed. Note the vivid narrative, the picturesque description. Peter now followed the angel out, but his mind was not yet clear enough to tell whether that which was done to him by the messenger of God was real; he still imagined that he was seeing a vision. In this manner they passed through the first ward, where the sentries of the watch were stationed, then also through the second, where the guards of the whole prison were on duty. They came to the great iron door which leads to the city, heavy and solid enough to bar the way effectually at ordinary times. But now the heavy gate opened of its own accord, automatically, yielding them a wide opening for escape. Stepping out, they went along one street, until there were no further hindrances to the apostle's flight, when the angel, just as suddenly as he had appeared, made his departure. It was a miraculous deliverance from prison and martyrdom which the Lord here granted to His servant, because it pleased Him to use him for the spread of His Gospel. If the Lord's plans are to be carried out, He will deliver them that are His from chains and prison and from the very mouth of death. The army of the angels about the small band of believers protects them against all assaults and persecutions, but by the permission of the Lord.

Peter in the house of Mary: V. 11. **And when Peter was come to himself, he said, Now I know of a surety that the Lord hath sent His angel, and hath delivered me out of the hand of Herod and from all the expectation of the people of the Jews.** V. 12. **And when he had considered the thing, he came to the house of Mary, the mother of John, whose surname was Mark, where many were gathered together praying.** V. 13. **And as Peter knocked at the door of the gate, a damsel came to hearken, named Rhoda.** V. 14. **And when she knew Peter's voice, she opened not the gate for gladness, but ran in and told how Peter stood before the gate.** V. 15. **And they said unto her, Thou art mad. But she constantly affirmed that it was even so. Then said they, It is his angel.** V. 16. **But Peter continued knocking; and when they had opened the door, and saw him, they were astonished.** After the departure of the angel, whom he had till then followed in such a dazed fashion, Peter at last came to himself, he became fully awake, he shook off the lethargy of sleep and regained the proper use of his senses. And now he realized also what the Lord had done for him. Now he knew for sure that the Lord had sent His angel and had delivered him from the hand of Herod and from all the earnest expectation of the people of the Jews. In no other way could it be explained that the heavy chains had been removed from his arms, that the sleep of the soldiers at his side had been so unnaturally sound, that the sentries of the two stations had been stricken with blindness and deafness, and that he was standing here, free, safe and sound. And so Peter pictured to himself the scene of the next day, the disappointment of the people, and the annoyance of the monarch whose hand and power had proved so feeble. This side of the matter presented itself to him first. But as he became still more fully conscious of the situation, it occurred to him that the Lord was here giving him a hint. And thus came the thought of escape, of what immediate steps he should take to save himself. So he turned his steps to the house of one of the disciples, Mary, the mother of John, with the surname Mark, where many of the brethren and sisters were assembled together as a congregation, busily engaged in prayer. Note: In spite of the lateness of the hour, the night being far advanced at this time, the disciples were kept awake by their loving solicitude and reverent regard for their teacher, not growing weary in praying for him and his welfare, an example which should be borne in mind at all times. Peter, having fully regained his bearings, had no difficulty, by the light of the moon now in the last quarter, in finding the house of Mary. He knocked at the wicket door of the gate leading to the vaulted entrance passage, and a maid-servant, or slave girl, by the name of Rhoda, came to answer his knock. But when, upon her challenge, she recognized the voice of Peter, she was almost beside herself with joy, forgetting even to open the gate to Peter. In fluttering eagerness she rushed back into the house and announced to the assembled disciples that Peter was standing outside. But her confident message was received with the incredulous cry: You must have lost your mind. And when she insisted with great vehemence that it was really so, that she could not be wrong in her recognition of the voice, they still would not believe, but declared that it must be his angel, Matt. 18, 10; Heb. 1, 14. They were of the opinion that Peter's guardian angel had assumed his form and voice and was standing before the door. Meanwhile Peter continued his knocking at the door, anxious to be

off the street, where there was always some danger of a late pedestrian's recognizing him. So they finally opened the door, saw and recognized him, and were greatly astonished. Their prayers had been heard far beyond their own expectations; the miracle was too great for them to grasp. Thus the Lord's hand is with His servants to protect them in all their work of ministry for Him. Note the kindly, intimate relations between the servant Rhoda and the other members of the household. If this story were taken as an example by masters and employees alike, there would be no servant problem in our days.

Peter leaves Jerusalem: V. 17. **But he, beckoning unto them with the hand to hold their peace, declared unto them how the Lord had brought him out of the prison. And he said, Go show these things unto James and to the brethren. And he departed, and went into another place.** V. 18. **Now as soon as it was day, there was no small stir among the soldiers what was become of Peter.** V. 19. **And when Herod had sought for him and found him not, he examined the keepers, and commanded that they should be put to death. And he went down from Judea to Caesarea, and there abode.** Peter was now again completely master of himself and of the situation. He realized that any outburst of joy might not only attract attention in the neighborhood, but would also result in the loss of valuable time. So he raised his hand in a gesture commanding silence, and quickly narrated to them how the Lord had led him out of the prison by a supernatural deliverance through His angel. Then he asked them to tell, notify, James and the other brethren of the turn of events. This James was most likely not James the son of Alphaeus, but James the brother of the Lord, who was associated with Peter in Jerusalem at the time of Paul's first visit and was very prominent among the elders of the congregation, Gal. 1, 19; 2, 9. But Peter, acting upon God's plain suggestion, went away and journeyed to another place. His presence was no longer required in Jerusalem, but the Lord had need of him and his services elsewhere. When the morning dawned, there was great commotion and excitement among the soldiers. They had been given a prisoner to guard, very likely with instructions that they must vouch for his presence the next morning with their lives, and now the prisoner was gone; they had no idea what had become of Peter. Naturally the report had to be made to the officer in charge of the prison, who, in turn, brought it to the attention of Herod. And it may well be that the tyrant, indignant at being foiled in the very last moment, came to the prison in person to make a thorough investigation. But it availed him nothing; he did not find Peter. And so, after the peevish manner of unreasonable tyrants, he examined the guards once more and then ordered them to be put to death, very likely for gross negligence of duty or for connivance in liberating a dangerous prisoner. Just the same, Jerusalem did not seem to Herod a safe place to stay after this. Whether his conscience bothered him, or whether he dreaded the reproachful and probably triumphant glances of the Jewish leaders, does not appear. He left Judea proper and spent some time in Caesarea. The conscience of a tyrant, wilfully guilty of unjustifiable crimes, will not permit him much rest. In the midst of luxury he feels ill at ease and is driven from one place to another.

The judgment of God upon Herod: V. 20. **And Herod was highly displeased with them of Tyre and Sidon; but they came with one accord to him, and, having made Blastus, the king's chamberlain, their friend, desired peace, because their country was nourished by the king's country.** V. 21. **And upon a set day Herod, arrayed in royal apparel, sat upon his throne, and made an oration unto them.** V. 22. **And the people gave a shout, saying, It is the voice of a god, and not of a man.** V. 23. **And immediately the angel of the Lord smote him, because he gave not God the glory; and he was eaten of worms, and gave up the ghost.** V. 24. **But the Word of God grew and multiplied.** V. 25. **And Barnabas and Saul returned from Jerusalem when they had fulfilled their ministry, and took with them John, whose surname was Mark.** Luke here adds a few words in regard to the cause of the death of Herod Agrippa I to round out the narrative. Herod was king of Palestine and of all the provinces south of Syria, but Phenicia, which belonged to Syria, was a thorn in his side. Whether it was merely a case of commercial warfare or of jealousy on account of some other advantage which the maritime province enjoyed, Herod was engaged in a violent quarrel with them, which might easily have culminated in some sort of bitter clash. But the cities along the coast could not afford to have such a condition obtain, since they received their grain and other foods from Palestine. Therefore they waited on him unanimously, having instructed their delegates to that effect. In addition, they managed to gain the good will of Blastus, the chamberlain, or minister of finance, of Herod, securing his good will in using his good offices for maintaining peace and removing the cause of the feud. It is by no means outside of the pale of the story or beyond reasonable possibility to suppose that bribery was resorted to, and that the king's good will was gained in this manner. Herod was highly pleased with his success in this matter, and so on a certain set day he received the embassy of the Phenicians, arrayed in the splendor of all his royal garments and sitting upon his throne, from which he formally addressed the commissioners and the assembled

people. And the entire multitude of the people, knowing that flattery will obtain in the case of a tyrant what reasonable arguments should in the case of a sensible person, cried out: The voice of a god and not of a man! Instead of reproving the flatterers with all signs of horror, the tyrant was highly pleased with their shouting. And therefore the punishment of God struck Herod at once. An angel of the Lord, as minister of the divine will, smote him for taking the glory away from God and thus becoming guilty of the basest blasphemy. He was seized with violent pains in the abdomen, caused by the fact that he was eaten by worms, lingered in great agony for five days, and then breathed his last. That was a visible judgment of God upon the persecutor of the Church. And many a tyrant since has felt the heavy hand of the Lord on account of his blasphemy, and has had a terrible end. But the death of Herod removed the pressure upon the congregations everywhere. The Word of God grew, spread, and multiplied. The removal of this obstacle gave a new impetus to the preaching of the Gospel. And Barnabas and Saul, having carried out their commission and fulfilled their service of mercy by transmitting the money that had been entrusted to them for the use of the sufferers, with the sincere good wishes of the congregation at Antioch, returned from Jerusalem, taking along with them John, with the surname Mark. He was their companion on this journey back to Antioch, and incidentally received some training in actual ministerial work, always of value to a young man that intends to enter the service of the Lord as a preacher.

Summary. *Herod has James beheaded and Peter imprisoned, the latter being delivered by an angel of the Lord, while the king is stricken by God; whereupon the Church again enters upon a season of prosperity.*

CHAPTER 13.

Paul and Barnabas on the Island of Cyprus. Acts 13, 1—12.

Barnabas and Saul delegated as missionaries: V. 1. **Now there were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers; as, Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod, the tetrarch, and Saul.** V. 2. **As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate Me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them.** V. 3. **And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away.** Luke here begins the second great part of his book of the Acts. After having narrated the story of the establishment of the Church, he now proceeds to furnish a biographical account of the missionary labors of Paul and of his captivity in Caesarea and Rome. In the local congregation at Antioch there were, as important and influential members, certain prophets and teachers, men to whom the Spirit had given the power to uncover the veil of the future whenever He so directed, and men that had the gift of teaching in an unusual measure. In some of them, as in the case of Paul, both gifts may well have been united, Gal. 2, 2; 2 Cor. 12, 1. Whether these men actually belonged to the presbyters of the congregation or not is immaterial; at any rate, they held positions of honor and importance among the brethren in the congregation. From the text it would almost seem to follow that the first three were especially distinguished for their prophetic ability, the last two for their gift of teaching. Barnabas is named first, as the man to whom the congregation really owed its sound establishment, then Simeon with the surname Niger, then Lucius of Cyrene, probably one of the disciples who first preached at Antioch, chap. 11, 20. In the second group are mentioned Manaen, a man of some influence, having enjoyed the distinction of having been brought up with, educated together with, Herod Antipas, as some think, his foster-brother, and finally Saul. The order in which they are given shows the relative importance accorded them, as usual in the careful writing of Luke. While these men were serving the Lord in the ministry of the Word, in the teaching and praying of public worship, and also observing the custom of fasting which they had taken over from the Jewish regulations, but probably did not observe on the same day, choosing Wednesday and Friday rather than Monday and Thursday, the Holy Ghost gave them a charge. Either in a vision or by direct prophetic communication to the one or the other of these men He commanded that Barnabas and Saul should now be set aside, placed in a class by themselves, for the purpose of performing the work for which He had called them. Not only Saul, therefore, but also Barnabas had been selected by the Lord for some special work in the interest of His kingdom, for the proclamation of the Gospel among the Gentiles. The will of God having been thus revealed, the congregation held a solemn service of ordination. Having fasted in preparation for the event, they joined in urgent prayer that God would bless and prosper the two chosen servants in their work, and then laid their hands on them in token of blessing and of official appointment. This was the method of separating or delegating them for the office or service for which the Lord intended them. Note: On similar occasions, even in our

days, if a man is separated for the ministry of the Word, or if a pastor is called to a new field, it is altogether proper and well-pleasing to God for those concerned in the movement, through their pastors or church officers, to lay their hands on them, and the custom of fasting, of making it a solemn occasion, is by no means to be despised. After this ceremony the two missionaries were sent away, dismissed, by the congregation. They were going forth as the delegates of the Church, as the representatives of the entire congregation, to proclaim the Gospel to the Gentiles. This fact is often lost sight of in our days, and consequently the feeling of responsibility for the missions of the Church is not so keen as it well might and should be. There is need for much improvement in this respect.

On the island of Cyprus: V. 4. **So they, being sent forth by the Holy Ghost, departed unto Seleucia; and from thence they sailed to Cyprus.** V. 5. **And when they were at Salamis, they preached the Word of God in the synagogs of the Jews; and they had also John to their minister.** V. 6. **And when they had gone through the isle unto Paphos, they found a certain sorcerer, a false prophet, a Jew, whose name was Bar-Jesus;** v. 7. **which was with the deputy of the country, Sergius Paulus, a prudent man; who called Barnabas and Saul, and desired to hear the Word of God.** Barnabas and Saul, being sent forth by the Holy Spirit, their visible separation had taken place before and in the name of the congregation, but they had been designated by a special revelation of the Spirit, and therefore the call proceeded from the Spirit and was merely transmitted through the congregation and its officers. With this certainty in mind, the missionaries of our days, having received the call of the Lord through the congregation or its representatives, may set out upon the work of their ministry just as cheerfully and confidently as the two men who left Antioch in Syria early in that eventful year of 46 A. D. Traveling first of all down to Seleucia, the port of Antioch, which was situated at the mouth of the Orontes, they embarked for the island of Cyprus. They crossed the arm of the Mediterranean Sea, a distance of some sixty miles, and landed at Salamis, a harbor on the southeastern coast. John Mark was with them as a servant, as a younger brother that might very well aid them in any clerical work, while having the benefit of their instruction. At Salamis the two missionaries made arrangements at once to proclaim the Word of God in the synagogs of the Jews. That was the rule which they observed: first the Jews, then the Greeks. In this way they journeyed slowly through the entire island, which at that time was thickly settled. It was a distance of some hundred miles to the western end of the island, to the capital, Paphos, where there was a famous shrine devoted to the heathen goddess Venus, and where, therefore, idolatry was practised to a frightful extent. Here resided the proconsul of the island, Sergius Paulus by name, a prudent man, clear-sighted, possessed of a good measure of common sense. Note: The reliability of Luke as a historian has been vindicated against foolish attacks in regard to this passage. Cyprus had anciently been governed by a propraetor, but in 22 B. C. it had been transferred by Augustus to the senate, and therefore proconsul is the correct title.[44] A peculiar character was attached to the household of the proconsul in the person of one Bar-Jesus, a Jewish sorcerer and false prophet, a kind of court-sage, magician, and confessor. People of his kind were found in many of the courts in those days and often wielded great influence over their masters. But Sergius Paulus was evidently tired of the spiritual food which this Jewish magician was able to dispense, and the oracles and auguries, after all, did not satisfy one that wanted a sound basis for belief. So he sent for Barnabas and Saul and earnestly desired to hear the Word of God. It is probable that he plied them with questions concerning the Word and their service in its interest, and while he was by no means predisposed to the acceptance of the Gospel, he by no means ridiculed its preaching before examining its claims. If the people of our day and age that claim for themselves both a thorough education and a fair degree of common sense and open-mindedness would but follow the example of the Cyprian proconsul and make a frank examination of the merits of the Gospel; the chances are that their natural prejudice would quickly be removed.

The opposition of Elymas: V. 8. **But Elymas, the sorcerer, (for so is his name by interpretation,) withstood them, seeking to turn away the deputy from the faith.** V. 9. **Then Saul, (who also is called Paul,) filled with the Holy Ghost, set his eyes on him** v. 10. **and said, O full of subtilty and all mischief, thou child of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord?** V. 11. **And now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon thee, and thou shalt be blind, not seeing the sun for a season. And immediately there fell on him a mist and a darkness; and he went about seeking some to lead him by the hand.** V. 12. **Then the deputy, when he saw what was done, believed, being astonished at the doctrine of the Lord.** Barnabas and Saul were making some progress with the proconsul, when they met with opposition from a very dangerous adversary. For this counselor of the proconsul, who had cleverly insinuated himself into the intimacy of his master, bearing the name Elymas, "the sage," as a sort of surname,

44) Hopkins, *Evidences of Christianity*, Lecture X; Zahn, *Einleitung*, II, Exkurs II, 632.

used all his influence to foil the attempts of the missionaries for the conversion of Sergius Paulus, his purpose being to divert him from the faith. The governor probably showed a strong inclination to accept the truth of the Gospel, and the sorcerer knew that such an event spelled the ruin of himself, the loss of his position. In this emergency, Saul assumed the leadership, which till now he had yielded to Barnabas, and from this time forth Saul was the more prominent of the two. This Luke indicates by inserting here the name by which Saul was henceforth known, which marked his apostleship to the Gentile world. Paul here became subject to an extraordinary manifestation of the Holy Spirit's influence, in whose power he attacked the magician in the very presence of the proconsul. Fixing his eyes upon the hypocritical Jew, he said to him: Thou son of the devil, full of deceit, guile, craft, and all wickedness. The sorcerer's present opposition showed him to be the natural enemy of the messengers of God, and of all righteousness, which they were trying to spread. Would he not cease, Paul asked, would he not give up acting as one that perverted, that made it his habit to mix up and turn aside, the straight and correct ways of the Lord? And the punishment of the Lord followed. At the words of Paul the hand of the Lord was laid heavily upon Elymas, causing him to become stone-blind and unable even to distinguish the light of the sun for some time, until such a time as it would please God to restore his sight. And there was no delay in the coming of the curse. At once, at the same moment, a dark mist fell upon him; he groped about, calling on one and another of the frightened bystanders to lead him by the hand and show him the way out of the presence of Paul; he was obliged to have such assistance since his blindness was absolute. This exhibition of the power of God convinced the proconsul; he was astounded at the doctrine, overwhelmed by the teaching of the Lord and about the Lord; he believed, faith in Jesus, the Savior, was engendered in his heart. Certain inscriptions which have been found in the last decades tend to show that Sergius Paulus was henceforth a firm believer in Christ, that he was enrolled with the Christians.[45] Note: Even to-day it is the guile and craft of the devil that tends to hinder the conversion and salvation of men, the efficacy of the divine Word, by sending false prophets and errorists. These are full of guile and fraud and enemies of true righteousness. But Christ, the Lord of His Church, is stronger than Satan, and carries out His work for the salvation of souls. But the apostles of darkness are finally condemned to spiritual blindness and darkness, making it impossible for them to find the right way.

45) Cobern, *The New Archeological Discoveries*, 538—540.

At Antioch, in Pisidia. Acts 13, 13—52.

The journey and the arrival: V. 13. **Now when Paul and his company loosed from Paphos, they came to Perga in Pamphylia; and John, departing from them, returned to Jerusalem.** V. 14. **But when they departed from Perga, they came to Antioch in Pisidia, and went into the synagog on the Sabbath-day, and sat down.** V. 15. **And after the reading of the Law and the prophets the rulers of the synagog sent unto them, saying, Ye men and brethren, if ye have any word of exhortation for the people, say on.** Some time after the events related by Luke in the first verses of this chapter, Paul and his companions left Paphos, sailing thence in a northwesterly direction a distance of some 170 miles to the bay of Attalia. They did not land in Attalia, however, but went up the river Cestrus to the city of Perga, the capital of Pamphylia, a little more than seven miles from the sea. It is probable that Paul intended to push on from here immediately into the interior of the country, which was then infested with lawless bands, concerning whose robberies and murders many tales were circulating. John Mark, therefore, did not prove equal to the occasion, but left the two missionaries for some carnal reason and returned to his home at Jerusalem. It often takes not only natural fortitude and strength, but especially the courage and power from on high to brave the difficulties and dangers of bringing the Gospel-message to foreign shores, and the absence of accustomed luxuries and even comforts must be endured cheerfully for the sake of the cause. The defection of Mark, however, did not interfere with the plans of Paul, for he and Barnabas left Perga and pushed on through the wild and lawless country of the Pisidian highlands to the valleys beyond until they reached the city of Antioch, about a hundred miles from the Mediterranean. It was situated in a strategic position, on a low plateau, which at the present time presents a desolate waste. It had been a Roman colony since 25 B. C., and, although situated in the district of Pisidia, was at that time considered a city of the Roman province of Galatia, the Romans having embodied a part of ancient Phrygia and all of Lycaonia and Pisidia in this larger province for administrative purposes.[46] Thus Pisidian Antioch was geographically and partly also linguistically Phrygian, but politically Galatian.[47] It was in the late summer, probably in August of the year 46, that Paul and Barnabas reached Pisidian Antioch. With characteristic energy they went to work. They went into the one synagog of the city on the Sabbath and sat down. The usual order of services was followed. A section of the Law was

46) Ramsay, *The Cities of St. Paul*, 262. 263.

47) Cobern, *The New Archeological Discoveries*, 531. 415.

read, then one from the prophets; then came exhortations based upon the passages read. It was the custom of the synagogs to invite a visiting rabbi to address the assembly at this point, and therefore the rulers of the synagog, who occupied raised seats before the congregation, sent word to Paul and Barnabas by the servant, the invitation: Brethren, if ye have any word of exhortation, of counsel, for the people, say it. Whether Paul and Barnabas had previously introduced themselves to the rulers of the synagog or not, is of little importance, but the kind request fitted in altogether with their purpose.

Paul begins his discourse: V. 16. **Then Paul stood up, and beckoning with his hand, said, Men of Israel, and ye that fear God, give audience.** V. 17. **The God of this people of Israel chose our fathers, and exalted the people when they dwelt as strangers in the land of Egypt, and with an high arm brought He them out of it.** V. 18. **And about the time of forty years suffered He their manners in the wilderness.** V. 19. **And when He had destroyed seven nations in the land of Chanaan, He divided their land to them by lot.** V. 20. **And after that He gave unto them judges about the space of four hundred and fifty years, until Samuel, the prophet.** V. 21. **And afterward they desired a king; and God gave unto them Saul, the son of Cis, a man of the tribe of Benjamin, by the space of forty years.** V. 22. **And when He had removed him, he raised up unto them David to be their king, to whom also He gave testimony and said, I have found David, the son of Jesse, a man after Mine own heart, which shall fulfil all My will.** Whether the invitation came to Paul with or without his seeking, he at once made use of it. Arising and holding out his hand in a gesture inviting attention, he addressed his hearers as men of Israel and those that feared God. The many references to the history of the children of Israel, which are found also in the sermons of Peter, but especially in that of Stephen, would interest not only the Jews, but prove highly instructive to the proselytes and strangers present as well. There is a certain amount of appeal to the national pride of the people, for it was the God of this nation of Israel that chose their fathers as His own from among all nations of the world. By His blessing they increased not only in numbers, but in strength and power as well, while they were strangers in the land of Egypt. With uplifted arm, then, by the application of His almighty strength, He led them forth from the land of Egypt. For forty years, out in the wilderness, He surrounded and bore them with solicitous care in spite of all their ingratitude. In the land of Canaan, to which the Lord brought the children of Israel, He destroyed utterly seven heathen nations before them, the Girgashites, the Amorites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Canaanites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites, Ex. 23, 23; Josh. 3, 10, dividing the land to the conquerors by lot. A space of some four hundred and fifty years, counting from the arrival of the people in Canaan to the final subjugation of the heathen nations at the time of David, was needed to carry out this command of the Lord. The last and most renowned of the judges was Samuel, the prophet. When Samuel had grown old, the people demanded of him a king, and God gave them Saul, the son of Kis, who reigned for forty years. But Saul did not bring his people the promised salvation, it being necessary for God to remove or depose him from the throne, 1 Sam. 15, 16; Dan. 2, 21. But after Saul's removal the throne was given to David, whom God raised up from the lowly in the land, and of whom He bears witness that He found David, the son of Jesse, to be a man according to His own heart, willing and able to perform all His will. In ascribing these words to God, Paul bears witness to the inspiration of the Old Testament, for his words, instead of being a quotation of one single passage, are a compilation from several verses, Ps. 89, 20 and 1 Sam. 13, 14. The testimony of the Old Testament, in all its parts, is true, since the Lord spoke through His servants.

The promise of the Messiah: V. 23. **Of this man's seed hath God according to His promise raised unto Israel a Savior, Jesus;** v. 24. **when John had first preached before His coming the baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel.** V. 25. **And as John fulfilled his course, he said, Whom think ye that I am? I am not He. But, behold, there cometh One after me whose shoes of His feet I am not worthy to loose.** With the mention of David, the great hero of Jewish history, Paul had opened the way to his main theme, the promise, the appearance, and the work of David's promised Son. It was no longer necessary for the Jews or for any other nation in the world to look forward to the Messiah's coming, since God had, according to His promise, 2 Sam. 7, 12, brought to Israel, out of the offspring of David, Jesus, the Savior. And this event had received further confirmation by the fact that John, in preparation for His coming, before the face of His entering in, had preached a baptism of repentance to the entire people of Israel. John's was also a baptism of repentance; by coming to the baptism of John, the sinner made a public acknowledgment of the fact that he was a sinner, and that he sought remission of sins by the water of Baptism. And as John was fulfilling his course, near the end of his career as preacher of repentance, he had publicly testified in favor of Christ: Whom do you suppose me to be? I am not He; but He comes after me whose sandals I am not worthy to bear, Matt. 3, 11; Mark 1, 7; Luke 3, 16; John 1, 19—27.

Prophecy fulfilled in the death of Jesus: V. 26. **Men and brethren, children of the**

stock of Abraham, and whosoever among you feareth God, to you is the Word of this salvation sent. V. 27. For they that dwell at Jerusalem, and their rulers, because they knew Him not, nor yet the voices of the prophets which are read every Sabbath-day, they have fulfilled them in condemning Him. V. 28. And though they found no cause of death in Him, yet desired they Pilate that He should be slain. V. 29. And when they had fulfilled all that was written of Him, they took Him down from the tree, and laid Him in a sepulcher. Very abruptly Paul changes from the simple historical exposition to a direct appeal that his hearers feel a personal interest in the matters which he is presenting to them. He includes them all in the address of brethren, both the children of the family of Abraham, the Jews by descent and birth, and the other devout men present, assuming that they all were filled with fear and reverence toward God. The Word of this salvation is sent forth to them, concerns every one of them vitally. Unless a person realizes that the work of Christ, the entire redemption, is of the most extreme importance to himself, the preaching of the Gospel is without value to him. It was necessary for Paul to make this urgent appeal, for his next statements might seem an attack upon the leaders of the Jews at Jerusalem. The inhabitants of the capital and their rulers did not know Christ, they did not recognize Him for what He was in truth, and they did not understand the voices of prophecy, the references in all the books of the prophets, though they were read in the synagogs every Sabbath. If they had had a proper understanding, they surely would not have become guilty of the wrong which they finally committed, chap. 3, 17. But in their very misunderstanding of the prophecies and the resultant condemnation of Christ they fulfilled the prophecies; for although they found no cause of death in Him, they yet demanded that Pilate must slay Him by crucifixion. And when they had carried out all that had been written of Him, then they, speaking generally, some of the Jews, took Him down from the cross and laid Him into a tomb. Very likely Luke's report of Paul's sermon is a brief summary. But the point which Paul wants to make stands out very plainly; for the crucifixion of Jesus, which in itself would be regarded as evidence that He was not the Messiah, was turned into an unanswerable argument in His favor. And incidentally the peculiar, carnal conception which the Jews held in regard to the Messiahship was properly corrected. The same argument may well be employed in our days, since the facts of Gospel-history, compared with the clearness of the Old Testament prophecies, carry conviction with overwhelming force.

The argument from the resurrection of Christ: V. 30. **But God raised Him from the dead;** v. 31. **and He was seen many days of them which came up with Him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who are His witnesses unto the people. V. 32. And we declare unto you glad tidings, how that the promise which was made unto the fathers, v. 33. God hath fulfilled the same unto us, their children, in that He hath raised up Jesus again; as it is also written in the Second Psalm, Thou art My Son, this day have I begotten Thee. V. 34. And as concerning that He raised Him up from the dead, now no more to return to corruption, He said on this wise, I will give you the sure mercies of David. V. 35. Wherefore He saith also in another psalm, Thou shalt not suffer Thine Holy One to see corruption. V. 36. For David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell on sleep, and was laid unto his fathers, and saw corruption. V. 37. But He whom God raised again saw no corruption.** Paul boldly places the statement at the head of this section of his discourse: But God raised Him from the dead. The full importance of the resurrection of Jesus for Christian faith must ever be kept in mind, since it is fundamental for the understanding of Christ's redemption. The first proof which Paul brings for the resurrection is the testimony of the eye-witnesses. Jesus was seen many days by those that had traveled with Him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who were now kept busy bearing witness of that fact to the people. Because of the certainty of this miracle not only the eye-witnesses, but also the present speaker and Barnabas were bringing their hearers the Gospel-news, that the promise given to the fathers God had fulfilled for those that were present, their children, in this fact, that He raised Jesus from the dead. And in case the testimony of the eye-witnesses were not deemed sufficient by them, Paul brings proof from Scriptures. There were the words of the Second Psalm: Thou art My Son, to-day have I begotten Thee. He was the eternal Son of God, in full possession of eternal life. It was impossible for Him, therefore, to remain in death; He must arise and give full expression to the life which was His from eternity. The second Scripture-passage which Paul adduces to prove that the resurrection of Christ was in accordance with prophecy, that God raised Him up from the dead, and that He should never return to corruption and decay, which seemed to envelop Him as He lay there in the tomb, was taken from Is. 55, 3, quoted from the Greek text. There God promises His people to make an everlasting covenant with them by giving them the holy and sure blessings of David. The sacred promises given to David could be realized only in the triumph, the resurrection, of God's Holy One; only by the living Christ can the blessings of the Gospel be ratified and assured. "If now this Christ, through whom this covenant is made, true man, as He was promised to David

of his blood and flesh, should bring and give eternal grace, for which reason He must be God, to whom alone it pertains to give this: then He must not remain in death, though He die like a natural man, but Himself must rise from the dead, in order that He may deliver others also from death and give them eternal life, that He may in truth be called and be an eternal King of grace, righteousness, and life, as God has firmly promised." 48) The final passage which Paul quotes is the same one which Peter had used in his great Pentecost sermon, Ps. 16, 10: Thou wilt not give Thy Holy One to see corruption. For, as the speaker rightly argues, these words cannot apply to David, since he, after having performed the work of his office for his own generation, fell asleep according to the will of God and did see corruption and decay in death. But this Christ, whom God raised up from the dead and also exalted to heavenly glory, did not see corruption, did not become subject to decay. A more direct and explicit prediction of the resurrection of Jesus cannot be found in the entire Old Testament, and the force of the words must have been felt by all the hearers.

The conclusion of the sermon: V. 38. **Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this Man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins;** v. 39. **and by Him all that believe are justified from all things from which ye could not be justified by the Law of Moses.** V. 40. **Beware therefore lest that come upon you which is spoken of in the prophets,** v. 41. **Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish; for I work a work in your days, a work which ye shall in no wise believe, though a man declare it unto you.** V. 42. **And when the Jews were gone out of the synagog, the Gentiles besought that these words might be preached to them the next Sabbath.** V. 43. **Now, when the congregation was broken up, many of the Jews and religious proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas, who, speaking to them, persuaded them to continue in the grace of God.** Since the facts adduced by Paul proved the Messiahship of Jesus, he could now continue his discourse by offering to his hearers the benefit of Christ's mediation before God. He wants it clearly understood by all that through Christ, through the power and completeness of His redemption, forgivenes of sins is announced to them, not as a prize to be earned or merited, but as a gift to be accepted. Paul literally declares: And from all that they could not receive absolution and righteousness from in the Law of Moses, in this every one that believes is justified. Far from yielding to the Law any ability to justify, as some commentators have believed, Paul rather denies that there is such a thing as justification by the Law. He appeals to the experience of his hearers. In spite of all their efforts to fulfil the Law, they must have had the feeling that all such attempts were hopelessly inadequate. The harder they tried to live up to every demand of the Law, the more they must feel the condemnation, not the justification, of the Law. All the more necessary, then, it was for them to turn to Christ, in whom every one that believes is justified. His words imply that the justification, the righteousness of Jesus, is present before all men, but that only such as accept its blessings by faith actually join the ranks of those that are justified before God. To impress these last points upon his audience, Paul adds a final word of warning. They should beware lest the saying in the book of the prophets find its application with them, Hab. 1, 5: See, you shameless people, and wonder, and perish, for a work I do in your days, a work which you will not believe, even if some one explain it to you. That is the punishment which strikes such as despise the message of the Gospel and harden their hearts against its glories. They see, but do not understand; they wonder, but do not believe; they become the prey of spiritual and, finally, of eternal death. The great work of redemption through the merits of Christ, done before their very eyes, they will not, and therefore finally they cannot believe, no matter how often it is pictured to them. This warning is fully in order to-day. Every one that hears and reads the Word of the Gospel should be sure to make the application to himself and accept the comfort of the forgiveness of sins earned by Christ, lest he receive the mercy of God in vain. The discourse of Paul made a deep impression, even though no immediate emotional reaction occurred. As he and Barnabas were leaving the synagog, those that were present earnestly begged them to repeat all these words, to proclaim the Gospel-message to them again on one of the days between the Sabbath, that is, on Monday and Thursday, when services were also held in the synagog. And when the services of the morning had been closed and the assembly dismissed, many of the Jews, the descendants of Abraham, as well as pious proselytes, such Gentiles as had accepted the Jewish doctrine and by circumcision become proselytes of the covenant, followed Paul and Barnabas, and the missionaries took the opportunity to talk to them and to exhort them to hold firmly to the grace of God. When people have once shown an interest in the message of the Gospel, they must be encouraged again and again to put their trust in, and cling firmly to, the grace of God. The power of the Spirit in the message will do the rest.

Opposition on the part of the Jews: V. 44. **And the next Sabbath-day came almost the whole city together to hear the Word of God.** V. 45. **But when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy, and spake against those things which were**

48) Luther, 12, 511.

spoken by Paul, contradicting and blaspheming. V. 46. Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold and said, It was necessary that the Word of God should first have been spoken to you; but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles. V. 47. For so hath the Lord commanded us, saying, I have set Thee to be a light of the Gentiles that Thou shouldest be for salvation unto the ends of the earth. On the following Sabbath the fruit of Paul's first sermon and of the labors of both missionaries during the week became apparent. Almost the whole city came together to hear the Word of the Lord, surely the largest assembly which the synagog had ever seen. But when the Jews saw the multitudes that gathered for the purpose of hearing the Gospel, they were filled with unreasonable jealousy. They tried to persuade themselves that this demonstration amounted to a disparagement of the Law of Moses, and began to contradict the words of Paul and finally even to blaspheme. Note: All wilful contradiction of the Gospel and its glories is a blasphemy of Christ and His salvation, and if the name of Christ is reviled in addition, the transgression assumes a very severe aspect. But now Paul and Barnabas were filled with the courage to state their position fearlessly and plainly. They told the angry Jews that it was necessary for the Word of God to be preached to them first, for so the command of the Lord must be understood, Mark 16, 15; Luke 24, 47, and therefore they had observed the rule: Jews first. But since now they were deliberately thrusting the Gospel aside and repelling its blessings, and were thus judging themselves as not worthy of eternal life, the apostles no longer felt the slightest hesitation about turning to the heathen. For this course agreed exactly with the prophecy, which now assumed the force of a command, Is. 35, 6: I have set, appointed, Thee as a light of the Gentiles, to be salvation, to bring redemption, to the end of the earth. Such had been the promise of God, in words addressed to the Messiah, in the Old Testament, and these words should find their fulfilment in the New Testament. Note: When a person has the opportunity of hearing the Gospel and accepting its saving message, and then deliberately thrusts it aside, he has no one but himself to blame for the resulting condemnation and damnation. "For since our nature is corrupt through sin, worthy and deserving of God's wrath and of damnation, therefore God owes us neither Word, Spirit, nor grace, and when He gives it out of grace, we often thrust it aside, and make ourselves unworthy of everlasting life." [49]

Success and persecution: **V. 48. And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the Word of the Lord; and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed. V. 49. And the Word of the Lord was published throughout all the region. V. 50. But the Jews stirred up the devout and honorable women and the chief men of the city, and raised persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them out of their coasts. V. 51. But they shook off the dust of their feet against them, and came unto Iconium. V. 52. And the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Ghost.** The reference of Paul and Barnabas to the passage from Isaiah and its application to the present situation filled the heathen that were present with great joy. With many others, they may have had the idea that the redemption was for the Jews only, or at least that the only way of obtaining its blessings was by joining the Jewish Church first through the rite of circumcision. So they praised the Word of the Lord, through which they were assured of acceptance into the kingdom of God directly, without the intermediate process of joining the Jewish synagog. And they believed, not all, but as many as were ordained or appointed unto eternal life by God, not in consequence of an absolute decree, but in Christ Jesus, through the redemption in His blood, Eph. 1, 4. 5. Their belief was the result of this gracious determination and foreknowledge, predestination, of God, which is spoken of at length in other passages of Scriptures, Eph. 1, 3—6; Rom. 8, 28—30. And this fact is a source of great comfort. The faith of a Christian and his preservation in this faith is not a matter which depends upon his own reason and strength, a precarious basis at best, but upon the grace of God in Christ Jesus, assured to him before the foundation of the world. "The eternal election of God not only sees and knows in advance the salvation of the elect, but also by the gracious and good will of God in Christ Jesus is a reason which effects, procures, helps, and promotes our salvation, and what pertains thereto; whereon also our salvation is so firmly founded that the portals of hell cannot prevail against it, as is written . . .: 'As many as were ordained to eternal life believed.'" [50] The result of this enthusiastic acceptance of the Word was also felt in ever-widening circles, for the Word of the Lord was carried through this entire region. It was spread not only in Antioch, but went far and wide through the entire district of Pisidia adjacent to the city. But the Jews, now angrier than ever on account of the success of the Gospel, urged on, incited, the devout women of the leading and influential families of the city as well as the first, the representative men, whom they probably approached through their wives. The best families in the city, including the administrative class, were involved, the social and political forces of the

49) *Form. Conc.* Mueller, 717.

50) *Form. Conc.* Mueller, 705.

district were arrayed against them. So a persecution was stirred up against Paul and Barnabas, and they were expelled from the city, not by mob law in this instance, but by magisterial action. They were probably ordered to leave the city at once and accompanied, none too gently, by the police officers. But the missionaries, nothing daunted, shook off the dust of their feet against them, as a protest, a testimony, and a warning, Matt. 10, 14; Mark 6, 11; Luke 9, 5, and proceeded to the city of Iconium as their next station. And the disciples that had been gained, far from being discouraged or being filled with grief and fear, were rather strengthened in their faith and filled with joy and the Holy Ghost. Even the ignominious expulsion of the teachers was a further proof of the truth of the Lord's words, and so far as their faith was concerned, its certainty and its joy no human power could deprive them of, since these were gifts of the Holy Spirit. Hatred and enmity of the Gospel of Jesus Christ will result in persecution as often as the enemies can get or make an opportunity. But the more the world jeers and the unbelievers rage, the greater is the comfort which the Christians have of their faith.

Summary. *On their first missionary journey, Paul and Barnabas make a tour of Cyprus, then cross over to Perga, in Pamphylia, and travel to Pisidian Antioch, where Paul preaches the Gospel with great success; but both teachers are expelled from the city, due to Jewish hatred and jealousy.*

CHAPTER 14.

Paul and Barnabas at Iconium and Lystra.

Acts 14, 1—18.

Success and persecution at Iconium: V. 1. **And it came to pass in Iconium that they went both together into the synagog of the Jews, and so spake that a great multitude both of the Jews and also of the Greeks believed.** V. 2. **But the unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles, and made their minds evil affected against the brethren.** V. 3. **Long time therefore abode they, speaking boldly in the Lord, which gave testimony unto the Word of His grace, and granted signs and wonders to be done by their hands.** V. 4. **But the multitude of the city was divided; and part held with the Jews and part with the apostles.** V. 5. **And when there was an assault made both of the Gentiles, and also of the Jews with their rulers, to use them despitefully, and to stone them,** v. 6. **they were ware of it, and fled unto Lystra and Derbe, cities of Lycaonia, and unto the region that lieth round about;** v. 7. **and there they preached the Gospel.** On leaving Antioch, Paul and Barnabas turned toward the east, pursuing their course for a distance of sixty miles over a table-land filled with countless herds of grazing sheep and goats, then crossed a small mountain ridge, and reached the thriving city of Iconium, which is still in existence as Konieh. It is situated at the head of a vast plain stretching toward the east, well watered and therefore important both for agriculture and for grazing. Many travelers compare Iconium with Damascus, both as to location and beauty. In both cases, also, the early history is shrouded in the mists of prehistoric times. It should be remembered that the Roman province of Galatia occupied the eastern end of ancient Phrygia, and included both the districts of Pisidia and Lycaonia. Therefore Iconium, the metropolis of western and central Lycaonian Phrygia, was a city of Galatia according to its administration. "The Romans naturally spoke of Iconium as lying in the half barbaric Lycaonia; but the people always distinguished themselves from the Lycaonians, preferring to think of themselves as citizens of a Phrygian-Hellenic city. Even the cities farther from North Galatia spoke of themselves as 'Galatian' and enjoyed being addressed thus. The city was strongly Roman and was given an imperial name A. D. 41." 51) Iconium being an important trade center, there was a strong Jewish population and therefore also a synagog. According to their custom, Paul and Barnabas went into the synagog and addressed the audience present, which consisted not only of Jews, but also of Greek proselytes, and probably of other Greeks that were favorably disposed toward the religion of the Jews. And their speaking, their testimony, made such an impression that a great multitude both of Jews and of Greeks believed. The conclusiveness of the evidence of the Gospel, the earnestness with which it was presented, and especially the power of the Spirit in the Word carried conviction to the hearers. But it was not long before the same thing happened here as at Antioch. For a considerable time indeed the missionaries were unhindered in speaking fearlessly of the Lord, who also confirmed the Word of His grace, which both proclaimed and transmitted this grace, by the testimony of signs and wonders which were done by the hands of the apostles. But the success which thus attended the preaching of the Word grated upon those Jews that refused to believe. They therefore began, and persisted in their efforts,

51) Cobern, *The New Archeological Discoveries*, 528; Ramsay, *The Cities of St. Paul*, 317. 343.

to incite and exasperate the souls of the people, the feelings of the Gentiles, against the brethren. As a consequence of this persistent agitation the populace of the city was divided, some people taking the part of the disaffected Jews, others that of the apostles; but the party which stood for truth and fairness, as usual, was not so active as that bent upon mischief. So the agitators finally worked up their adherents and others to such a pitch of excitement that a mob was formed consisting of both Gentiles and Jews with their rulers. The tumult with hostile intention was just about to break forth, the general plan being to abuse Paul and Barnabas, to treat them despitefully, and to stone them, when the intended victims found out about the brewing violence. Since a mob is absolutely without reason and sense, intent only upon shedding blood, and amenable only to a sudden display of effective spiritual or physical power, the missionaries did not believe it would serve the cause of the Master to await the onslaught, but fled from the city. Since Iconium was not far from the boundary of the district of Lycaonia, they crossed the frontier and went to Lystra, a distance of some eighteen miles.[52] This was a hill-town and a Roman colony, a Roman garrison being stationed there at least for some time. The native language therefore had to combat the influence of the Latin tongue. The surroundings of the city were more thoroughly pagan and less permeated by Jewish bias than in either Iconium or Antioch. The other town, Derbe, named as a town of the district to which Paul and Barnabas fled, was also in Roman Lycaonia, on the extreme southeastern edge of the Lycaonian plain, in the northern foothills of the Taurus Mountains, near a conical mountain now known as Hadje-Baba, not so very far from the pass known as the Cilician Gates, which leads down to Tarsus. In this region, the extreme frontier of Roman influence, Barnabas and Paul were now engaged for some time in preaching the Gospel, apparently without opposition. Thus the persecution and the flight of Christians has ever served to aid the spread of the Gospel.

A miracle and its effect upon the people: V. 8. **And there sat a certain man at Lystra, impotent in his feet, being a cripple from his mother's womb, who never had walked.** V. 9. **The same heard Paul speak; who, steadfastly beholding him, and perceiving that he had faith to be healed,** v. 10. **said with a loud voice, Stand upright on thy feet. And he leaped and walked.** V. 11. **And when the people saw what Paul had done, they lifted up their voices, saying in the speech of Lycaonia, The gods are come down to us in the likeness of men.** V. 12. **And they called Barnabas, Jupiter; and Paul, Mercurius, because he was the chief speaker.** V. 13. **Then the priest of Jupiter, which was before their city, brought oxen and garlands unto the gates and would have done sacrifice with the people.** Since there was apparently no synagog at Lystra, Paul and Barnabas very likely preached in the open space near the gates or in the market-place. Now a certain man of Lystra had been lame ever since his birth and had no strength in his feet to hold him up. He had never been able to take a step, but usually sat on the ground near the places where people assembled or passed. So his history from infancy was well known in the city. This man listened carefully and earnestly as Paul was speaking and addressing the crowds that would assemble from time to time, and, the attention of Paul being directed to the cripple, he fixed his eyes upon him to determine by this scrutiny whether the unfortunate man had learned and understood enough of the power of the Savior to believe that he could be healed. Having satisfied himself on this point, Paul cried out to the cripple with a loud voice: Stand up straight on thy feet. And without any assistance the man jumped to his feet and began to walk about. The power of the exalted Christ, through the mouth of Paul, had performed this miracle. The crowds present saw what Paul had done, and after the shock of the first surprise had only one explanation to offer, the one which was immediately suggested to their heathen minds, namely, that some of their gods, having assumed the likeness of men, had come down to them. In accordance with this idea, which they expressed in their native tongue, that of Lycaonia, although they knew and understood Greek very well, they suggested that Barnabas be called Zeus (Jupiter), who was considered the chief God of the Greeks and Romans, and Paul Hermes (Mercury), since he was supposed by them to be the messenger of the gods to men, and Paul had usually led the discussions. An inscription found a few years ago in some ruins near ancient Lystra shows that these two gods were classed together by the inhabitants of that region.[53] Now there was a temple or a place of sacrifice to Jupiter before the city, and the heathen priest attached to this place of worship immediately had the servants bring oxen and wreaths of flowers to the gates of the city, near the vaulted entrance arches where the people were assembled. His intention was to bring sacrifice to the two missionaries together with the people. This scene shows the darkness and blindness of heathenism. Not only do the heathen serve dead idols, but they even take men for gods and offer them sacrifices and worship. And it surely is a sign of the times that it is becoming customary to extol up to heaven the merits of such as have done the country an extraor-

52) Cobern, *The New Archeological Discoveries*, 414. 529.

53) Cobern, *The New Archeological Discoveries*, 526.

dinary service, literally, to idolize them and to worship before them. This is not only revolting from the standpoint of human reason, but indicates that the fashionable world of our days is rapidly sinking back to the level of the heathen.

The horrified speech of Paul: V. 14. **Which when the apostles, Barnabas and Paul, heard of, they rent their clothes, and ran in among the people, crying out,** v. 15. **and saying, Sirs, why do ye these things? We also are men of like passions with you, and preach unto you that ye should turn from these vanities unto the living God, which made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all things that are therein;** v. 16. **who in times past suffered all nations to walk in their own ways.** V. 17. **Nevertheless He left not Himself without witness, in that He did good, and gave us rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness.** V. 18. **And with these sayings scarce restrained they the people that they had not done sacrifice unto them.** Evidently there was here a bilingual situation which complicated matters. While the inhabitants of the city were fully able to use the Greek language in business and matters of every-day life and could also understand the missionaries very well, their language of religion was the tongue which they had always employed for that purpose. Very likely Paul and Barnabas did not understand the outcries of the people, for though Paul, at least, had the gift of tongues, 1 Cor. 14, 18, it does not follow that it was in his power at all times. But the news of the intended sacrifice was soon brought to the ears of the two apostles, either while they were still busy with their teaching, or when they had returned to their lodgings. Shocked beyond measure by the very thought of the pretended sacrifice, Paul and Barnabas both tore their mantles in token of deep grief, distress, and horror, Gen. 37, 29. 34; Josh. 7, 6, and sprang out among the crowd, shouting loudly meanwhile to attract attention quickly. They called out: Men, what is this that you are doing? They explained that they were men, human beings, with the same affections as the citizens of Lystra. They had the same powers and appetites, needed food and clothing in the same way, and were subject to death like all other human beings. They did not preach themselves nor present themselves for adoration, but were messengers with a good, a wonderful news of salvation, namely, that the people of Lystra should turn themselves, turn entirely away from these vanities which they were professing and practising, their idols and their worship. In doing so, they should turn to the living God, the one God who was the Author and Dispenser of life. For this true God it was that had made the heaven and the earth and the sea and everything that is in them. Cp. chap. 17, 24. The living God had given evidence of His power and life in the act of creation; the God of creation and the God of redemption is one. Paul here, as a wise and careful missionary, appealed to the knowledge of natural religion, in order to build upon it the beauty of revealed religion. In the admonition of Paul that the people should turn from the vanity and foolishness of their idolatry it was implied that their ways had been wrong ways. God had, in times that were now past and should never return, shown great forbearance and patience in letting all the nations go their own ways. He did not strike down and destroy the heathen that had turned to idolatry, but permitted them to live, since there was always the chance of their searching for, and learning to know, the true God, chap. 17, 30. Nevertheless, as Paul points out, even during those times God did not leave Himself unattested. His continuous beneficent activity and goodness was manifested in His doing good, in His granting from heaven, whence all good things come, Jas. 1, 17, rains and fruitful seasons, in His filling their hearts with food and good cheer. Purposely he says "hearts" and not "bodies," since he wants to lead his hearers away from a mere care of the body and this present life to the care of their immortal soul. It was a tactful, but none the less impressive reminder of the fact that they had not been guiltless in times past, since the evidence of God's creative power and of His providence had been apparent on every hand to lead them to search more diligently for the true God. The speech barely quieted the people and prevented their carrying out the intention of offering sacrifices to Paul and Barnabas. The behavior of the two missionaries serves as an example for the missionaries of our days. To yield to, to accommodate the Christian religion to, sinful, idolatrous practises, with the specious plea that it is necessary to gain the people's confidence, is always foolish. The confidence of people cannot be held by a denial of the truth. Every form of enmity toward God, of idolatry, of the service of mammon, of the world, of sin, must be branded as such, not by a tactless zeal, but as the matters come forward for attention. Upon the basis of such instruction the preaching of the Gospel may then be built up and true and saving faith be wrought by the Spirit of God.

The Return Journey to Syria.

Acts 14, 19—28.

Mob violence in Lystra and the Gospel in Derbe: V. 19. **And there came thither certain Jews from Antioch and Iconium, who persuaded the people, and, having stoned Paul, drew him out of the city, supposing he had been dead.** V. 20. **Howbeit, as the disciples stood round about him, he rose up, and came into the city; and the next day he departed with Barnabas to Derbe.** V. 21. **And when they had preached the**

Gospel to that city and had taught many, they returned again to Lystra and to Iconium and Antioch, v. 22. **confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.** V. 23. **And when they had ordained them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed.** The news of that strange happening, in which men had almost been worshiped as gods, traveled quickly along the trade routes, reaching Iconium first and soon after even Antioch, in Pisidia, and the Jews immediately concluded that the two men could be no others than Paul and Barnabas whom they had persecuted. The fact that these men were carrying on their work in other cities of the province so angered some of the Jews that they did not hesitate to make the long journey to Lystra. Here they worked assiduously to persuade the multitudes, soon converting them into a mob and thus demonstrating again the uncertainty of temper and the fickleness of favor which characterizes crowds. It seems that the attack upon Paul was sudden, while he was attending to his duties. They stoned him and then dragged him out of the city, supposing him to have died, and ready to leave his body to its fate, like that of some wild beast. But when the murderers had left the scene, the disciples, some of whom had been gained also in this city, came out to investigate, and when they stood around Paul, probably considering the best way of burying him, he arose and went into the city. The Lord had held His sheltering hand over His servant and prevented the stones from having mortal effect upon his body. But it was clear to the apostle that under the circumstances he could not hope to have success in this city; the agitators were still present, and the minds of the people had been prejudiced against the Gospel. So on the very next day he set out with Barnabas for Derbe, a distance of some twenty miles, almost on the Cilician frontier. Here quick success attended their efforts: they preached the Gospel continuously, bringing the glad tidings to that city; they made many disciples, thus founding a congregation also here, where it must have been almost, if not entirely, composed of Gentiles. Paul now might easily have made the journey down to Tarsus, to strengthen himself and recuperate from the strenuous exertions of this missionary trip. But his love and solicitude for the newly gained converts moved him to make the return journey back over the same route, stopping at Lystra, at Iconium, and at Antioch, in order. In every city he confirmed, strengthened, the souls of the disciples by sound Gospel-preaching and by evangelical admonition. Since persecution had come upon them at least indirectly through the removal of Paul, he exhorted them, he earnestly urged them, to remain in, to abide in, to stay with the faith. Having accepted Christ in firm trust as their Savior, they should not permit tribulations and persecutions to take this faith out of their hearts. For that is true in general of the Christians: Through many tribulations we must enter into the kingdom of God. That is the inevitable lot of the believers, that is what they must expect in the midst of a sinful and hostile generation. The Christians of all times have need of such encouragement to be firm in the midst of cross and persecution. On the same trip also Paul and Barnabas had the congregations in each city elect, by popular vote, by a show of hands, elders in every congregation. The Christians themselves established the office of the ministry in their midst for the continual teaching of the Word of God, in order that the disciples might be kept in the faith, and that ever more souls might be won for Christ. Note: The apostles here did not make use of any hierarchical powers, but put the matter of electing their ministers into the hands of the congregations. The Christian congregation makes use of this peculiar church power and should retain this right at all times. Paul and Barnabas finally commended all the brethren to the Lord by prayer with fasting. In the keeping, in the charge, of the Lord they are safe; His care can protect them against enmity and comfort them in persecution. Those that believed the apostles committed to the Lord; for only by faith is the communication with the Lord established, only by faith can it be maintained.

The last part of the return journey: V. 24. **And after they had passed throughout Pisidia, they came to Pamphylia.** V. 25. **And when they had preached the Word in Perga, they went down into Attalia,** v. 26. **and thence sailed to Antioch, from whence they had been recommended to the grace of God for the work which they fulfilled.** V. 27. **And when they were come, and had gathered the church together, they rehearsed all that God had done with them, and how He had opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles.** V. 28. **And there they abode long time with the disciples.** It was impossible for Paul to be inactive in the service of his Lord while he was traveling back to Syria. So he and Barnabas made a missionary trip through Pisidia, the province adjoining Roman Galatia on the south. Thus they reached Pamphylia and now took time to speak the Word of God in Perga, where they do not seem to have stopped on the journey to the upper country, chap. 13, 13. Incidentally they seem to have waited for an opportunity of setting sail for Syria. But when no chance offered, they went down to the seacoast, to the harbor of Attalia, in Lycia, whence they sailed to Antioch. In this city they had been appointed to their office as missionaries and committed to the grace of God for the work which

they had now finished. They had enjoyed the singular, merciful blessing of God on their journey, and had, above all, received abundant assurance that it is the grace of God which enables a man to do work in the Gospel, Eph. 3, 8. So it was with a heart full of thankfulness that they returned to the congregation at Antioch. Just as soon after their arrival as it could be arranged, there was an assembly of the congregation, in which the two missionaries reported in full on the success of their labors, as they stated it, how many and how great things God had done with them as the instruments of His grace, and also on their behalf, in being with them and aiding them, both in performing the work of their calling and in enduring the persecutions that had come upon them. It is God who must give the increase whenever and wherever the Gospel is preached. It was He that had opened to the Gentiles the door of faith, making their hearts willing, and giving them free access to the salvation of Jesus Christ. Note: It is altogether well-pleasing to God if the missionaries at home and abroad make reports of their work to the congregations that have sent them forth, thus showing that God is with the work, and that He opens the doors to the preaching of the Gospel. After this, Paul and Barnabas both spent a long time with the disciples of Antioch, probably more than a year, busy with their work of preaching and gaining new members for the congregation of Christ.

Summary. *Paul and Barnabas preach the Gospel at Iconium, at Lystra, and at Derbe, enduring persecution for the sake of the Lord, and then retrace their steps for the sake of strengthening the brethren, continue their work in Pisidia and Pamphylia, finally returning to Antioch, in Syria.*

THE TRUSTWORTHINESS OF LUKE AS A HISTORIAN.

The Bible and its contents are not in need of vindication. To us Christians the Bible in all its parts is the inspired Word of God, whose foolishness is wiser than men. In taking this standpoint, we do not throttle reason, well knowing that the doctrines of Scriptures are not, strictly speaking, against human reason, but simply above and beyond reason. In studying the Bible, therefore, we make use of our reason in a very decided fashion, but always so that we take it captive under the obedience of Christ. For this reason, also, we welcome all research in history and archeology which will throw additional light on Bible lands, Bible customs, Bible language, and all other questions pertaining to a better understanding of the Word of salvation. For this reason we feel a great deal of satisfaction in the fact that the trustworthiness of Luke as a historian, aside from the fact of inspiration, has been established most gloriously by recent investigations.

A number of years or decades ago, especially at the time when the rationalistic theological literature had reached the crest of its flood and its criticism was accepted by a large part of Christendom without question, there were several charges registered against Luke as a historian. It was stated that there were several mistakes in his account of the nativity of our Lord.[54] It was said that Cyprus, in the days of the Apostle Paul, had been a praetorian, not a consular, province, and that therefore Sergius Paulus was incorrectly called proconsul. It was alleged that Luke's geographical knowledge of Asia Minor must have been extremely hazy, to express it mildly, that he did not know into which province the various cities belonged, and that therefore his geographical notes were altogether unreliable. It was charged that his calling the city of Philippi a colony was an obvious mistake.

But in each single point the holy writer has been vindicated so completely that the opponents are forced to retire in utter dishonor. This is due to the untiring zeal and to the indefatigable exertions of a number of scholars, among whom were Duchesne and Collignon, Hamilton, Waddington, but, above all, Sterret in his book *Epigraphical Journey in Asia Minor in 1884*, and Sir W. M. Ramsay, in his series of monographs, among which the *Historical Geography of Asia Minor*, *St. Paul the Traveler and Roman Citizen*, *Pauline and Other Studies*, *Was Christ Born in Bethlehem*, *The Cities of St. Paul*, and *The Bearing of Recent Research on the Trustworthiness of the New Testament* should receive mention. The results of these researches have been ably summarized by Cobern, in his *The New Archeological Discoveries.*

The fact that Sergius Paulus was, not propraetor, but proconsul of Cyprus, has been shown both directly and indirectly, as noted above. The fact that Paul had entered into the district of Lycaonia in going to Iconium, and that this city was incidentally, administratively considered, reckoned with the cities of South Galatia, has received confirmation which takes away all reasonable doubt. The fact that Philippi was a colony in the time of St. Paul has been demonstrated by the finding of a coin which stated this fact. In short, the very stones are crying out in vindication of the Scriptural account and of the truth of the Gospel-story, as any one may convince himself if he will go to the delightful trouble of consulting the books mentioned above. And each new discovery, bringing further witness of the truth of the Bible account, aids in stopping the mouths of the gainsayers, if not in convincing them of the truth of Scriptures, and thus the glory of the exalted Christ is further increased.

54) Cp, the article appended to Luke 2, "The Enrolment of Quirinius."

CHAPTER 15.

The Convention at Jerusalem.

Acts 15, 1—35.

The question about circumcision: V. 1. **And certain men which came down from Judea taught the brethren and said, Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved.** V. 2. **When therefore Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and disputation with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas and certain other of them should go up to Jerusalem unto the apostles and elders about this question.** V. 3. **And being brought on their way by the church, they passed through Phenice and Samaria, declaring the conversion of the Gentiles; and they caused great joy unto all the brethren.** V. 4. **And when they were come to Jerusalem, they were received of the church, and of the apostles and elders, and they declared all things that God had done with them.** The Christian congregations of Palestine and Syria were now enjoying a season of external peace and prosperity, and therefore Satan, as a sower of discord, determined to create internal dissension, thus working a most severe form of harm. There had been some dissatisfaction among those of the circumcision in Jerusalem at the course of Peter in entering into the house of Cornelius, chap. 11, 2. 3. At that time the matter had been adjusted satisfactorily when Peter had narrated the facts pertaining to the case. But it seems that certain members of the Church had since grown restive once more, their Jewish prejudices being unable to feel satisfied concerning conditions. Some of these purposely, as it seems, made the journey down to Antioch in Syria, and not only expressed it as their opinion, but began to teach, they made every effort to force their teaching on the brethren of the congregation, declaring that unless they received circumcision according to the usage of Moses, they could not be saved. They thus made circumcision, an Old Testament sacrament, a condition of salvation in the New Testament. Naturally the matter caused a very heated controversy and discussion, since Paul and Barnabas could not possibly keep silence at such an open attack of their work in Antioch, on Cyprus, and in Asia Minor. The Judaizing teachers, then, were responsible for the threatening discord; they began the questioning and disputing. It is difficult to realize the distress and confusion which must have followed and racked the minds of the brethren while the controversy was in progress. With such bitter emphasis did the men from Judea insist upon their point that Paul and Barnabas did not succeed in silencing them. So the congregation finally resolved and determined that Paul and Barnabas and some other men out of their midst should make the trip up to Jerusalem to settle this question of dispute, if possible. Paul and Barnabas were thus commissioned by, they acted as delegates of, the congregation at Antioch. Among their companions was Titus, Gal. 2, 1. 3. Note: This procedure of the northern congregation was not an appeal to a higher tribunal nor even to a representative body, but simply a mission or delegation of one congregation, in itself independent and autonomous, to another of the same rank. Having been sped on their journey by their congregation, very probably in this manner, that the members accompanied them out for some distance, an action which both emphasized the solemnity of the occasion and the interest which the brethren took in the matter, the little party slowly traveled down along the coast through Phenicia, then cutting across Samaria toward the southeast. Wherever they found brethren, they narrated to them in full the conversion of the Gentiles as they had witnessed and experienced it. And in all places they found sympathetic listeners, to whom their recital of the wonderful mercy of the Lord brought great gladness. As they neared Jerusalem, they left behind them a string of congregations where the hearts were uplifted to the Lord in pure joy over the wonder of His redemption to all men. Upon their arrival at Jerusalem, Paul and his companions were received by the entire congregation, as well as by the apostles then present in the capital and by the elders of the local body, and they rendered a complete report, telling how many and how great things God had done with them as His instruments of grace, and on their behalf, in giving testimony to the Word as it was preached by them.

The demand of the former Pharisees and Peter's answer: V. 5. **But there rose up certain of the sect of the Pharisees which believed, saying, That it was needful to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the Law of Moses.** V. 6. **And the apostles and elders came together for to consider of this matter.** V. 7. **And when there had been much disputing, Peter rose up and said unto them, Men and brethren, ye know how that a good while ago God made choice among us that the Gentiles by my mouth should hear the word of the Gospel and believe.** V. 8. **And God, which knoweth the hearts, bare them witness, giving them the Holy Ghost, even as He did unto us;** v. 9. **and put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith.** V. 10. **Now, therefore, why tempt ye God to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear?** V. 11. **But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they.** V. 12. **Then all the multitude kept silence, and gave audience to Barnabas and Paul, declaring what miracles**

and wonders God had wrought among the Gentiles by them. Matters seemed to be adjusting themselves very nicely, when opposition developed. Some men that had formerly been members of the sect of the Pharisees had been overcome by the evidence of the Gospel and had accepted Jesus in true faith. But some of their former ideas concerning the necessity of keeping the Law persisted. These now arose in the meeting and stated with great emphasis their opinion, namely, that it was absolutely necessary for all the converts among the Gentiles to be circumcised and to observe the Law of Moses, that is, the ceremonial law, as it concerned the people of God in the Old Testament. It is the same false and dangerous doctrine which has cropped up in the Church at all times, namely, that the keeping of the Law is essential for meriting salvation. This was a very serious objection, a discordant note in the harmony of the meeting, so serious, in fact, that the assembly adjourned to meet once more at another time. When the convention, the apostles and elders, together with the entire congregation, vv. 12. 22. 25, assembled again, it was with the express purpose to look closely into this matter, to reach a definite conclusion with regard to the threatening dissension. The meeting did not open very auspiciously. There was a heated debate with many pointed questions, the Pharisaic party insisting upon having its opinions accepted. But after this discussion had been going on for some time, Peter arose and took the floor. In a perfectly cool and objective way he presented his views. Addressing the assembly as "men and brethren," he reminded them that they had found out, and were therefore fully aware of the fact, that from the earliest days, almost from the founding of the Church, in fact, God had chosen that by his, Peter's, mouth the heathen should hear the Word of the Gospel and come to faith. He referred to the demonstration given by the Lord in the case of Cornelius. At that time God, who knows the hearts and minds of all men, chap. 1, 24, had borne testimony in favor of the Gentiles, by giving them the Holy Ghost, just as He had given Him to the apostles and the other Jewish disciples. God had made no distinction, no discrimination between Jews and Gentiles, but had given to the latter the full purity of heart by faith. Though they were uncircumcised, the Spirit had been granted them, just as well as to those of the circumcision. The outward purification which attended the Jewish rite is here contrasted with the full and complete purification of the heart which follows belief in Jesus the Savior. "Therefore this faith of which the apostle speaks is not a simple knowledge of the story, but it is a strong, powerful work of the Holy Ghost which changes the hearts." 55) Since these things were true, Peter argues, why should they tempt God, why should they put Him to the proof, why should they try out His patience and forbearance, by an intimation as though He had admitted unworthy members into His Church? Why should they want to lay upon the necks of these people, whom God had admitted without the Jewish rite, a yoke, the yoke of the ceremonial law, which neither their fathers nor they themselves had been able to bear? The detailed injunctions governing even the minutest acts of every-day life had ever proved a heavy burden to all the Jews, and it would be wrong to transmit this burden to the Gentiles. And this argument bore all the more force since they all, both Jews and Gentiles, hoped to be saved through grace, through the unmerited grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. Every rule and order that emphasized merits and works on the part of man would naturally detract from the glory of the free grace of the Lord, and would make salvation itself a matter of doubt. The arguments of Peter were unanswerable and caused the opponents to become and remain silent. Moreover, the general debate was not again resumed, for now Barnabas and Paul took the floor, and the entire multitude listened to them as they narrated how many and how great signs and miracles God had performed among the heathen through them. Note that Luke here again places the name of Barnabas first. It was Paul that had spoken to the sorcerer Elymas; it was Paul that had healed the lame man at Lystra; and it naturally fell to Barnabas to recount these facts. By confirming the Word of the Gospel among the Gentiles in this way, when Paul and Barnabas were inviting the heathen and organizing them into congregations without laying upon them the demands of Mosaic legislation, the Lord gave proof of His approbation of the work and emphasized the Gospel of free grace in Christ Jesus.

The proposal of James: V. 13. **And after they had held their peace, James answered, saying, Men and brethren, hearken unto me:** v. 14. **Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles to take out of them a people for His name.** V. 15. **And to this agree the words of the prophets, as it is written,** v. 16. **After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up,** v. 17. **that the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles upon whom My name is called, saith the Lord, who doeth all these things.** V. 18. **Known unto God are all His works from the beginning of the world.** V. 19. **Wherefore my sentence is that we trouble not them which from among the Gentiles are turned to God,** v. 20. **but that we write unto them that they abstain from pollutions of idols, and from fornication, and from things strangled, and from blood.**

55) *Apologia.* Mueller, 105.

V. 21. For Moses of old time hath in every city them that preach him, being read in the synagogs every Sabbath-day. By the time Barnabas and Paul had finished their rehearsal of the success which attended their labors, the hearers could not have had any other impression but that the conversion of the Gentiles was a work of God, and that their discipleship, even without the observance of the ceremonial law, must necessarily be acceptable to Him. No one else, therefore, having asked for the privilege of the floor, James, that is, James the Just, the brother of the Lord, one of the pillars of the congregation at Jerusalem, according to common report its head after the removal of the apostles, arose and added the evidence of prophetical prediction to that of the facts presented by the previous speakers. Requesting the audience to listen carefully, he opened his remarks with a reference to the report of Peter: Simeon has explained in what manner God at first, from the beginning, resolved to gain a people out of the Gentiles unto His name, for the glory and praise of His holy name, and called by His name, as His children. With this fact agree the words of the prophets. Although James quotes only one of the prophets, he may either have had in mind the book of the prophets or implied that the other prophets make similar statements. He quotes the words Amos 9, 11. 12 according to the Greek translation. There the Lord had promised to return after this, at the time fixed by Him in the future. He would then build anew, erect once more, the tent of David which had been destroyed, laid low. He does not speak of the Old Testament Church as the house of David, as in other places, but as a tent, a booth, a hut that had decayed and fallen into ruins. But this hut which was lying on the ground as though struck down by a storm the Lord wanted to build anew and to set upright again as the tabernacle of the New Testament. This rebuilding of the ruins took place in and through Jesus Christ, in order that those that remained of the people should seek the Lord most diligently, that the rest of men, that is, all the heathen, without respect of persons and of works, all upon whom His name is pronounced in the preaching of the Gospel, should strive to possess the blessings of the Lord. It was this Lord that was doing all these things, whose manner of performing them could not be gainsaid. For He was not in the habit of performing any of His works in a haphazard manner, but had worked according to definite plans from the beginning of the world. And He had made these facts known of old, from the beginning of the world. On the basis of this clear prophetical statement, whose fulfilment no one could deny after hearing the reports made to the assembly, James now ventured an opinion, not necessarily as the president of the meeting, but as a speaker that presents the result of his deliberations in the form of a resolution. He offered the motion that they should not trouble or molest in any way those people among the Gentiles that were turning to God, and had been accepted by Him in faith. But he suggested that letters be sent to them warning them against the contamination of idol worship, against committing fornication, against partaking of meat of strangled animals, and against eating blood. In the worship of idols was included idolatrous feasts, where meat was served that had been sacrificed to false gods. To some extent, also, the sins against the Sixth Commandment were practised in connection with the temples of the idols, though these sins were prevalent otherwise as well, nameless breaches of the Christian law of purity taking place as a matter of fact. That is the will of God to the Christians of all times, that they avoid fornication and all uncleanness, and that they remain unspotted from the world and its lusts, including the unclean, idolatrous joys and delights of the world. But that James wanted to add the prohibition concerning the eating of animals that had been stunned or strangled without the loss of blood, and that of blood itself, Lev. 17, 13; Deut. 12, 16. 23; 15, 23, was done for another reason. These practises had been forbidden in the Old Testament and were considered especially disgusting by the Jews, an abomination before the Lord. And the Jewish Christians had not yet been able to throw off this feeling of loathing and disgust. In the opinion of James, therefore, the Gentile Christians might well be asked to have some consideration for their Jewish brethren in this case. Christian charity demanded as much, especially where meals were eaten in common. James added, in concluding his speech, that Moses from ancient times had men in all cities that proclaimed him in the synagogs, since he was read in the services on every Sabbath, that is, his books were read and explained in the services. The chances were, therefore, that these Mosaic customs would be well known everywhere, and their non-observance might cause offense, as though the way of salvation in the New Testament were different from that of the Old. Then, also, there was danger that the intercourse between Jewish and Gentile Christians would cease entirely unless the latter would be willing, for charity's sake, to observe a decree which would make brotherly communion possible. And finally, those that still clung to the outward observance of the Mosaic customs need not be apprehensive, since Moses was at this time still being read. James knew very well that this would change in time, but did not propose to force the issue by tactless haste. Note: The draught which James proposed was not a compromise resolution, as has been stated. It was not his opinion that the heathen Christians should indeed not be burdened with the entire Law of Moses, but only

with certain ordinances. Even the smallest particle of the Mosaic Law, laid upon them as a condition of salvation, would have taken away the faith of the Christians in the free grace and mercy of the Savior. His suggestion was merely a proposal for the sake of Christian order, not to burden believing hearts, but to simplify the problem of uniting two races in the same congregations without the danger of continual friction. These directions did not concern the way of salvation, for this the Gentile Christians had learned from the Gospel.

The resolutions of the assembly: V. 22. **Then pleased it the apostles and elders, with the whole Church, to send chosen men of their own company to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas; namely, Judas, surnamed Barsabas, and Silas, chief men among the brethren;** v. 23. **and they wrote letters by them after this manner: The apostles and elders and brethren send greeting unto the brethren which are of the Gentiles in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia.** V. 24. **Forasmuch as we have heard that certain which went out from us have troubled you with words, subverting your souls, saying, Ye must be circumcised, and keep the Law, to whom we gave no such commandment,** v. 25. **it seemed good unto us, being assembled with one accord, to send chosen men unto you with our beloved Barnabas aud Paul,** v. 26. **men that have hazarded their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.** V. 27. **We have sent therefore Judas and Silas, who shall also tell you the same things by mouth.** V. 28. **For it seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things:** v. 29. **that ye abstain from meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication; from which if ye keep yourselves, ye shall do well. Fare ye well.** The speech of James ended the discussion. The opposition could not hold out against this clear presentation. The manner employed by this assembly serves as an example to this day. If there are differences of opinion in a congregation or in a church-body, especially such as concern some Christian doctrine, it is a matter for the Christians to discuss and settle in meetings, in congregational or synodical assemblies. And the Word of God decides all questions. When a point of doctrine has been plainly set forth from Scriptures, then all good Christians will gladly consent to the truth and repudiate error. The matter being settled so far as Jerusalem was concerned, the apostles and elders, together with the entire congregation, decided to choose men out of their own midst and to send them to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas: The election resulted in the choice of two men that were prominent among the brethren, namely, Judas Barsabas and Silas (the latter being identical either with the Silvanus of 2 Cor. 1, 19 or with Tertius, Rom. 16, 22). These representatives, or delegates, of the congregation were furnished with proper credentials, or letters of identification, addressed not only to the congregation at Antioch, but also to those throughout Syria and Cilicia, the provinces where the controversy was probably known by this time. The apostles and elders and brethren disclaimed, first of all, any and all responsibility for the words of those men that, claiming to come from the congregation at Jerusalem, had disquieted and unsettled the brethren with their teaching and disturbed their souls by the unauthorized statements concerning the necessity of circumcision and the need of keeping the Law. These false teachers had acted without authority and commandment of the mother congregation, altogether in an arbitrary fashion. Therefore the assembly at Jerusalem, represented by the senders of the letter, having come to one opinion and being now of the same mind, had decided to elect men and to send them to Antioch with their own delegates, Paul and Barnabas. The two latter men are distinguished highly and praised as men that have offered up their souls, risked their lives, for the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. In the persecutions which had come upon them these men had, to all intents and purposes, been martyrs, though the Lord had spared their lives. Such men are needed in the Church to this day, missionaries that are willing to offer themselves, all their gifts, abilities, and powers, to the service of the Lord. Judas and Silas were the delegates from Jerusalem in this matter, and they were well qualified to explain, without the suspicion of prejudice, whatever in the written document might appear obscure to any one. And then the resolution is given. It had seemed the right and proper thing to the Holy Ghost and to the entire congregation, through whom the Holy Ghost had made known His will. The Holy Spirit, speaking through the Word, was really the Author of the decree, but the congregation, in voicing His pleasure, showed that they were altogether willing to accept the decision, although they themselves belonged to the Jewish race. No extra burden was to be placed upon the Gentile Christians; they were not to be made subject to the Law of Moses, but they should feel themselves obliged to yield to this necessary rule, to abstain from meat sacrificed to idols, from the eating of blood, from the flesh of strangled animals, and from fornication, from sexual vice in any form. The resolution was thus given practically as proposed by James. In accepting this charge, the Gentile Christians would in part be carrying out the will of the Lord as contained in the Moral Law and in part the demands of brotherly love. In any event, it would be well with them, because the peace and concord which would thereby be established in the various Christian communi-

ties would be to their own interest. The letter closed with the customary farewell greeting. Note: The so-called Council of Jerusalem was in no sense a general council, and offers no basis for hierarchical claims. "The so-called Council of Jerusalem in no way resembled the general councils of the Church either in its history, its constitution, or its object. It was not a convention of ordained delegates, but a meeting of the entire church of Jerusalem to receive a deputation from the church at Antioch." 56) The resolution of the meeting is most significant in its clear statement concerning evangelical freedom and the rejection of works. "This point mark well, for herein everything is included. The resolution . . . is this: The Law of Moses should not be imposed upon the disciples from the Gentiles, but they should be taught to be saved by faith, without the Law of Moses. Here observe whether they place doctrines of men above the Word of God or elevate themselves above it; yea, be careful, for they do not set up anything but the true chief part of Christian doctrine, namely, faith and Christian liberty, and they watch with great earnestness, lest a greater burden be placed upon the disciples. But they should be permitted to stay in the faith, as Christ teaches and had confirmed from heaven through the Holy Spirit." 57)

The delegates in Antioch: V. 30. **So when they were dismissed, they came to Antioch; and when they had gathered the multitude together, they delivered the epistle;** v. 31. **which when they had read, they rejoiced for the consolation.** V. 32. **And Judas and Silas, being prophets also themselves, exhorted the brethren with many words and confirmed them.** V. 33. **And after they had tarried there a space, they were let go in peace from the brethren unto the apostles.** V. 34. **Notwithstanding it pleased Silas to abide there still.** V. 35. **Paul also and Barnabas continued in Antioch, teaching and preaching the Word of the Lord, with many others also.** The delegates of the congregation at Jerusalem having received their credentials, they were sent away, together with Paul and Barnabas, in a spirit of brotherly love, and probably after a special farewell service; for the apostles and elders were well aware of the importance of their mission. The whole company went down to Antioch, traveling the entire distance by land. There they called a meeting of the multitude, of the entire congregation, and formally delivered the letter. And when the brethren that had been disturbed so seriously by the Judaizing teachers had read the communication, they rejoiced greatly over the consolation which it brought them. The entire congregation, being liberated from the sense of oppression which had weighed them down during the last weeks, hailed the relief of the letter with joy. This impression was further strengthened also by Judas and Silas, who, being themselves prophets, and thus endowed by God with extraordinary gifts of applying the comfort of the Gospel, personally encouraged the brethren with many a word of counsel and led them back to firm trust in the Lord's Word and work. As a result of this mission it was clearly shown that the Lord, out of Jews and Gentiles, had made one body, the holy Christian Church, the communion of saints. Having spent some time in the midst of the congregation at Antioch, the delegates from Jerusalem were dismissed in peace, in perfect harmony, by the brethren, to return to those that had delegated them. Thus the unity of spirit found its proper expression in the fine fraternal relationship that obtained between these two congregations, which knew themselves to be one in the Lord. Opportunities for mission-work were by no means exhausted in Antioch, a fact which induced Paul and Barnabas to remain in Antioch, to spend some time there in earnest work, teaching privately whenever catechumens were found, and preaching the Gospel publicly. And in this work they were not alone, but found able assistants in others who were also constrained by the love of Christ to witness in His interest, to proclaim His Word. In this way, peace was fully restored, and the congregation soon returned to its former state of quiet growth. By the grace of God, periods of disturbance in a congregation will make the Christians more fervent in prayer, more zealous for the cause of the Lord, and more firmly established in the Word of Grace.

The Beginning of Paul's Second Missionary Journey. Acts 15, 36—41.

V. 36. **And some days after, Paul said unto Barnabas, Let us go again and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the Word of the Lord, and see how they do.** V. 37. **And Barnabas determined to take with them John, whose surname was Mark.** V. 38. **But Paul thought not good to take him with them who departed from them from Pamphylia, and went not with them to the work.** V. 39. **And the contention was so sharp between them that they departed asunder one from the other; and so Barnabas took Mark, and sailed unto Cyprus;** v. 40. **and Paul chose Silas and departed, being recommended by the brethren unto the grace of God.** V. 41. **And he went through Syria and Cilicia, confirming the churches.** After some days, after some time had elapsed, Paul suggested to Barnabas that they return, that they reenter the road over which they had traveled, and visit the brethren in every city in

56) Farrar, *Life of Paul*, 243.

57) Luther, quoted in Besser, *Bibelstunden*, III: 2, 744.

which they had proclaimed the Word of the Lord, to see how they were getting along. A true missionary is not satisfied with merely organizing mission-stations and congregations, but is interested also in their establishment and growth in spiritual knowledge. The suggestion seems to have appealed to Barnabas, but when they were talking over their plans as to companions, he strongly advised taking his nephew John Mark along, and practically insisted upon it. But as even the best of friends may differ on questions of expediency and of personal preference, so it happened here. Paul believed that it was not fair to themselves and to their work to take the younger man along, whose defection at Perga, chap. 13, 13, had probably seriously inconvenienced them. Paul may have thought that Mark still did not possess the necessary maturity and strength of character for such difficult work. The difference of opinion proceeded to a point where there was a serious outbreak of anger, causing them to part company. "There is little doubt that severe words were spoken on the occasion. It is unwise to be overanxious to dilute the words of Scripture, and to exempt even apostles from blame. . . . We cannot, however, suppose that Paul and Barnabas parted, like enemies, in anger and hatred. It is very likely that they made a deliberate and amicable arrangement to divide the region of their first mission between them, Paul taking the continental and Barnabas the insular part of the proposed visitation. Of this at least we are certain, that the quarrel was overruled by Divine Providence to a good result. One stream of missionary labor had been divided, and the regions blessed by the waters of life were proportionally multiplied." 58) That the estrangement was not permanent appears from the fact that Paul refers to Barnabas as a fellow-worker unto the kingdom of God, Col. 4, 11; 1 Cor. 9, 6, and that he speaks of Mark as profitable to him for the ministry, 2 Tim. 4, 11. But the brethren in Antioch evidently believed Paul to be in the right, for when Barnabas took Mark and sailed for Cyprus, there was no special leave-taking, whereas when Paul chose Silas, the prophet from Jerusalem, as his companion, he was commended by the brethren to the grace of the Lord. Very likely there was a meeting of the congregation and a farewell service as when Paul left on his first journey. So Paul left Antioch with his companion, traveling by land, in order to visit the congregations of Syria and Cilicia which had been founded either by some of the scattered brethren after the execution of Stephen or by Paul himself at a time concerning which we have no further data, Gal. 1, 21. Wherever the two missionaries came, they confirmed the congregations, they made them firm in faith and trust by proper instruction and exhortation. Visitations of this kind are bound to result in blessings for the congregations thus visited.

Summary. *On account of threatening dissension caused by Judaizing brethren, Paul and Barnabas are delegated to the congregation at Jerusalem for advice; an assembly is held, and the results sent to the brethren at Antioch in a letter delivered by Judas and Silas; Paul chooses Silas as his companion on his second journey after an altercation with Barnabas.*

58) Conybeare-Howson, *Life and Letters of St. Paul*, I, 270. 271.

CHAPTER 16.

Paul and Silas in Asia Minor.

Acts 16, 1—10.

Timotheus, the Christian disciple: V. 1. **Then came he to Derbe and Lystra; and, behold, a certain disciple was there, named Timotheus, the son of a certain woman, which was a Jewess, and believed; but his father was a Greek;** v. 2. **which was well reported of by the brethren that were at Lystra and Iconium.** V. 3. **Him would Paul have to go forth with him; and took and circumcised him because of the Jews which were in those quarters; for they knew all that his father was a Greek.** Paul and Silas had entered Asia Minor in the extreme southeastern corner, through the pass known as the Syrian Gates, or Beilan Pass, in Mount Amanus. From the Cilician lowland, where Paul may have passed through Mopsuestia, Adana, and Tarsus, the journey went up over the rugged and beautiful Taurus Mountains and through the pass known as the Cilician Gates to the great Lycaonian plain. Derbe being the nearest city to the Cilician frontier, the first stop was made here. But the apostle evidently did not tarry long in any city which he visited, since he had a definite plan in mind. For at Lystra, where he had spent some time on the first journey and had also been stoned by the mob, chap. 14, 8—20, there was a certain disciple by the name of Timotheus, one of those converted by Paul on the previous visit. His mother was a Jewess that had retained her faith, but his father was a Greek, and evidently not a proselyte. Marriages with heathen were forbidden by the Jewish law, Deut. 7, 3; Ex. 34, 16; Ezra 10, 2. But the prohibition was not strictly observed, especially not among the Jews outside of Palestine, where colonies had been established for many years, and where the Jews had accommodated themselves to, and accepted all but the religion of, their fellow-citizens. Here marriages of Jewesses with influential Gentiles were by no means uncommon. Timothy had been instructed in the Holy Scriptures from infancy, 2 Tim.

1, 5; 3, 14. 15, and, like many another true Israelite, had soon learned to know the proper application of the prophecies to Jesus Christ of Nazareth. And he was well spoken of, not only in his home town, Lystra, but even at Iconium, the brethren of the congregations all having the very highest opinion of his Christian character. These and other qualities recommended the young man very highly in the eyes of Paul, who wanted him to become a companion and an assistant on his journey. Young men that have a good reputation in the Christian congregation for soundness of Christian character, and otherwise show ability and willingness for the work, are in great demand in the vineyard of the Lord. Having made the necessary arrangements by which Timothy was to accompany him, Paul first performed the rite of circumcision in his case. This was not necessary from a Scriptural standpoint; it had expressly been rejected at the meeting in Jerusalem and had not been done in the case of Titus, Gal. 2, 3. 4. But in this case Paul showed his tact and wisdom. The Jews in that entire region, knowing Timothy's parentage, would be apt to take offense at his preaching and ministering, and thus hinder his work there and elsewhere. Thus Paul became a Jew unto the Jews, a Greek unto the Greeks, in order that he might gain both Jews and Greeks, 1 Cor. 9, 20. 21. Wherever a Christian, and especially a Christian preacher or missionary, is able to remove a cause of offense without denying the truth of the Gospel, he should do so by all means, for it may mean souls won for Christ.

Through Asia Minor to Troas: V. 4. **And as they went through the cities, they delivered them the decrees for to keep, that were ordained of the apostles and elders which were at Jerusalem.** V. 5. **And so were the churches established in the faith, and increased in number daily.** V. 6. **Now, when they had gone throughout Phrygia and the region of Galatia, and were forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the Word in Asia,** v. 7. **after they were come to Mysia, they assayed to go into Bithynia; but the Spirit suffered them not.** V. 8. **And they, passing by Mysia, came down to Troas.** The zeal of Paul knew neither weariness nor rest; he was ever active for his Lord. As he traveled through the cities where congregations had been founded through his own efforts or those of disciples that had become missionaries, he and his companions delivered to them all the resolutions which had been fixed by the apostles and elders in Jerusalem. All the congregations were admonished to observe these decrees, although they were directed only to the congregations in Syria and Cilicia. Uniformity of practise, especially in such important matters, is to be recommended very highly for churches of the same confession. In this way the congregations everywhere were established in the faith; the encouraging admonitions of the apostle and his companions strengthened their faith. And a second result of the visitation was that the churches increased in numbers day by day. Thus Paul made the rounds of the congregations in this entire district, which was racially Phrygian, but administratively Galatic: Iconium, Antioch, and all the stations that were connected with these cities. He may even have extended his labors into North Galatia, though recent investigations seem to oppose this assumption.[59] Many congregations sprang into existence under his labors in Galatia, 1 Cor. 16, 1, and he was always united with these disciples by the ties of a fervent love. Having carried out his missionary labors to the extent which he had intended in this province, Paul planned next to visit the province of Asia, a maritime province in southwestern Asia Minor, on the Aegean Sea. But he was hindered, prevented, from speaking the Word in this province by the Holy Spirit. This was done either by an inner revelation or by a prophetic intimation which permitted of no misunderstanding. So they journeyed to Mysia, into the borders of this province, west of Phrygia, and there made the attempt to turn northward into Bithynia, a province on the Black Sea. But again the Spirit of Jesus intervened and hindered them. Note: The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Jesus Christ, Rom. 8, 9, as well as the Spirit of the Father, Matt. 10, 20. Nothing now remained for them to do but to travel due west to Troas, a seaport on the Aegean, opposite Greece. It is the Lord that directs and governs the course of the Gospel on earth. All the matters and circumstances are arranged by Him in such a way as to serve the Gospel according to His will.

The vision: V. 9. **And a vision appeared to Paul in the night: There stood a man of Macedonia and prayed him, saying, Come over into Macedonia and help us.** V. 10. **And after he had seen the vision, immediately we endeavored to go into Macedonia, assuredly gathering that the Lord had called us for to preach the Gospel unto them.** The reason for all this maneuvering now became apparent. During the night, apparently the same night after they had arrived in Troas, a vision appeared to Paul by which the Lord intended to communicate His will to the apostle. A man from Macedonia was standing before him, either in a dream or in a condition of ecstasy, addressing him in words of earnest pleading: Cross over into Macedonia; help us! When Paul had seen this vision, he and his companions, to whom Luke had now been added, at once made earnest efforts to leave for Macedonia, for they were firmly agreed that the Lord had chosen this method of calling them to preach the Gospel in Europe. The little company now consisted

59) Cobern, *The New Archeological Discoveries*, 415.

of Paul, Silas, Timothy, and Luke, one as anxious as the other to secure early passage on some boat that plied between the Aegean ports. Note: Whenever the directions of the Lord as to some work to be done are plain, all those that are concerned should be filled with the same anxiety to enter upon the work; for His business requireth haste.

Paul and His Companions at Philippi.

Acts 16, 11—40.

The voyage to Philippi: V. 11. **Therefore loosing from Troas, we came with a straight course to Samothracia and the next day to Neapolis,** v. 12. **and from thence to Philippi, which is the chief city of that part of Macedonia and a colony; and we were in that city abiding certain days.** V. 13. **And on the Sabbath we went out of the city by a riverside, where prayer was wont to be made; and we sat down and spake unto the women which resorted thither.** In those days of active commercial intercourse between the various Aegean ports, it did not take long for them to find a ship upon which they could take passage. Paul and his companions therefore drew away, they set sail from Troas, being favored by a good stiff breeze from the south and east, which enabled them to make a straight run past the island of Imbros to that called Samothrace, one of the northernmost islands of the Grecian archipelago. Here they turned toward the west and sailed past the island of Thasus to the Macedonian port of Neapolis, the latter part of the journey taking only one day. Thus the voyage had been undertaken under unusually propitious circumstances and completed in an exceptionally short time. The missionaries did not remain in Neapolis, however, but pressed on to the larger city of Philippi, which was a Roman colony, both coins and inscriptions corroborating the words of Luke.[60] Near it was fought the great battle between Augustus and Antony on one side, and Brutus and Cassius, the murderers of Julius Caesar, on the other, the battle which decided that Rome would be an empire, and not a republic. In honor of this event Philippi had been granted the rights of a Roman colony, as the name "praetors," used by Luke to designate the officials of the city, also shows. And Philippi was the first city in that district, or division, of Macedonia. For almost two centuries before, Macedonia had been divided into four districts, whose general boundaries were still recognized, although they were no longer accepted by the government as political districts. That Philippi was the first, the most important city of that part of Macedonia was due to its location on the great Egnatian Way, the main Roman road between Europe and Asia. It was in those days what Byzantium, or Constantinople, later became, the gateway to the Orient.[61] The Roman province of Macedonia lay between Greece and the Aegean Sea, on the south, and the Balkan Mountains, on the north. In Philippi, then, where the East and the West met, these travelers from the Orient spent some time, anxious to gain some souls for the Lord. Since the Jewish population of the city at that time was not large enough to support a synagog, and the Jews had therefore the custom of gathering outside of the city gates, on the banks of a river, by the riverside, and of holding their meetings of prayer there, this site had become known as the place of prayer. To that spot, therefore, Paul and his companions also went on the Sabbath, to the river Gangas or Gangites. There was probably no formal worship, as in the synagogs, although there may have been leaders of the devotions. At any rate, Paul accommodated himself to the conditions. He sat down with his party among the worshipers and spent the morning talking to the women that had come together there. It seems, then, that the Jews and proselytes of the city consisted largely of women, many of whom occupied positions of considerable freedom and social influence, a fact which is fully borne out by careful historical research. Note: It may have seemed strange to Paul, after all the elaborate preparations, to find only a handful of women assembled, but God has His own ways of doing things and conducting the affairs of His kingdom, as the subsequent condition of the Philippian congregation shows.

The conversion of Lydia: V. 14. **And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshiped God, heard us; whose heart the Lord opened that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul.** V. 15. **And when she was baptized and her household, she besought us, saying, If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house, and abide there. And she constrained us.** In the audience on the river bank, on that memorable morning when the first Christian service was conducted on European soil, was a certain woman, a merchant by the name of Lydia, the name by which she was probably known for business purposes, since she hailed from Thyatira in Lydia, a district of proconsular Asia. She was a dealer in purple, that is, in garments dyed with a very costly dye, and must therefore have been comparatively well-to-do. "Thyatira was noted for its dyeing. Madder root, with which they dyed a Turkey-red, grows abundantly in the neighborhood. As the ancients employed the names of colors with great laxity, this was often

60) Cobern, *The New Archeological Discoveries*, 545; Hopkins, *Evidences of Christianity*, Lecture X.

61) Cp. *Expositor's Greek Testament*, II, 344. 355; Hogarth, *Authority and Archeology*, 349. 350.

termed purple."[62] Lydia was a God-fearing woman, that is, she was a Jewish proselyte, she believed in and reverenced the God of the Jews, whose worship had been taught her. She listened carefully to the entire discourse, and the Lord opened her heart fully to attend to the matters which were explained by Paul, the news that Jesus of Nazareth was the promised Messiah. So thoroughly was she and all the members of her household (she may have been a widow with a number of children, as well as a number of servants) convinced of the truth of the Gospel that she and they all confessed their faith forthwith and were baptized — a fine nucleus for a congregation in whose welfare Paul always took great interest. The gratitude of Lydia for the blessings of which she had now been made a partaker prompted her to extend a cordial invitation to the missionaries to accept her hospitality. It was in the form of earnest pleading that she said to them: If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, since the fact that you baptized me seems to argue that you consider me a believer in the Lord, please come to my house and abide there. And she did not rest until she had persuaded them to come and be her guests. Such hospitality in return for the great spiritual gifts received is a proof for the change of heart produced by faith, and is well-pleasing to the Lord.

The encounter with the spirit of divination: V. 16. **And it came to pass, as we went to prayer, a certain damsel possessed with a spirit of divination met us, which brought her masters much gain by soothsaying;** v. 17. **the same followed Paul and us and cried, saying, These men are the servants of the most high God, which show unto us the way of salvation.** V. 18. **And this did she many days. But Paul, being grieved, turned and said to the spirit, I command thee in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her. And he came out the same hour.** Even in Philippi, although there was no synagog there, Paul and his companions continued to observe the hours of prayer. But as they were on their way to the place of prayer, presumably the bank of the river, they were molested by a certain slave-girl, who, literally, possessed a python spirit. But she was not merely an artist in ventriloquism, as the word is often understood in secular accounts, but she had a spirit of divination, with prophetic power; she was possessed of a demon. This slave, who brought much gain, a great deal of money, to her owners and masters by her soothsaying, made it a habit, day after day, to meet the party of Paul and then follow closely at his heels, crying out meanwhile, with a loud voice: These men are servants of God the Most High, who also are proclaimers of the way of salvation to you. The girl was not mistress of herself in crying out thus. As one commentator has it, the girl at one time was overmastered by the evil spirit, who was her real lord; at another she felt a longing for deliverance from her bondage. The evil spirit in her was quaking at the sight of Christ's servants and could not help but acknowledge the truth. But Paul was finally filled with annoyance, with grief, pain, and anger. The Lord does not want to be preached by evil spirits, as His conduct in the gospels shows. Besides, according to the meaning associated with the girl's words by the multitude, they might believe the missionaries to be ministers of superstition or of magic.[63] Therefore Paul spoke, not to the slave, but to the evil spirit that possessed her, charging him in the name of Jesus Christ to come out from her. And in that same hour, according to the Greek way of speaking, in the same moment, according to ours, the spirit and her power left her. Note: The diviners, soothsayers, and fortune-tellers of our days also make use of the name and the Word of God, but only for the purpose of deceiving the poor misguided souls that consult them, and thus of holding the souls all the more firmly in their doctrine and devilish tricks. It is our duty, therefore, to expose the evil intention and the deceit of the devil. For even if he makes predictions and performs acts which seem to be miraculous, they are never done with the command and promise of the Lord and are always detrimental to the salvation of souls.

Paul and Silas imprisoned: V. 19. **And when her masters saw that the hope of their gains was gone, they caught Paul and Silas, and drew them into the market-place unto the rulers,** v. 20. **and brought them to the magistrates, saying, These men, being Jews, do exceedingly trouble our city,** v. 21. **and teach customs which are not lawful for us to receive, neither to observe, being Romans.** V. 22. **And the multitude rose up together against them; and the magistrates rent off their clothes, and commanded to beat them.** V. 23. **And when they had laid many stripes upon them, they cast them into prison, charging the jailer to keep them safely;** v. 24. **who, having received such a charge, thrust them into the inner prison, and made their feet fast in the stocks.** When the evil spirit went out of the slave-girl, the hope of gain of her masters also went out, as Luke notes, in a fine play upon the word. The income from this source was not only endangered, but was cut off entirely, a fact which touched them in their most sensitive spot. But when the owners of the girl realized this, they were filled with anger. Laying hold upon Paul and Silas, they half pulled and half dragged them to the mar-

62) Barton, *Archeology and the Bible*, 226.

63) Ramsay, *The Bearing of Recent Discovery*, 137.

ket-place, to the forum, before the magistrates of the city. Here they became a little less turbulent in their behavior, leading their prisoners up to the praetors with some semblance of order and decency. The praetors were the chief authorities of the city, whose duty it was to try all cases of a political nature. The official title of the two men was *duoviri*, but they often styled themselves praetors. The charge of the masters of the slave was somewhat peculiar. They declared that Paul and Silas, Jews as they were, were not only creating a disturbance in the city, but were agitating the town by proclaiming such religious customs as would not be proper for them to accept and to exercise, since they were Romans. The complaint then was, in brief, that the apostles were upsetting the entire social and religious system of the city, a fact all the more to be condemned since the accused belonged to the despised Jews. The insinuation, which hinted at the introduction of prohibited religious customs of a particularly objectionable kind, as well as the fact that the men were Jews, was sufficient to rouse the multitude present in the forum, a mob which was easily incensed and swayed. Without so much as giving the prisoners an opportunity of defending themselves against the charges, the praetors led in the assault upon them by causing their clothes to be torn from their bodies and then commanding them to be beaten with rods, a grievous and degrading punishment. Only after many lashes had been laid upon Paul and Silas was the first fury satisfied. But then came the further indignity, according to which the praetors cast them into prison and gave the keeper of the jail the earnest charge to keep them safely with all diligence and rigor. This command the keeper interpreted in his own way, influenced possibly also by his own feeling in the matter, for he not only put them into the inner prison, with several walls between them and freedom and a minimum of light and air to cheer them, but he also secured their feet in the stocks, a wooden instrument of torture in which the feet were tightly clamped, holding them firmly in one position and thereby causing a good deal of pain. The clamping of the feet in the stocks interfered with the circulation and cramped the muscles, a torture which became more unendurable with every minute. Note: Every confessor of Christ and of the Gospel is liable to be treated in the same way, to become a partaker of the reproach of Christ. And those men especially that proclaim the way of salvation are considered disturbers of the peace and insurrectionists by the children of the world.

The earthquake at midnight: V. 25. **And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God; and the prisoners heard them.** V. 26. **And suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken; and immediately all the doors were opened, and every one's bands were loosed.** V. 27. **And the keeper of the prison awaking out of his sleep, and seeing the prison-doors open, he drew out his sword, and would have killed himself, supposing that the prisoners had been fled.** V. 28. **But Paul cried with a loud voice, saying, Do thyself no harm; for we are all here.** Peter had calmly slept in prison on the night before his execution was to take place, chap. 12, 6. And here these two disciples, with their backs aching and bleeding from the merciless whipping, with their legs cramped in the instrument of torture, and their minds smarting with the sense of injustice which they had suffered, were able to put all thoughts of the torture aside and to pray. And in prayer they even got the necessary strength to sing hymns to God, to praise Him in psalms. Paul and Silas were singing, and the other prisoners were listening with attentive interest. It was a service of praise and thanksgiving such as had been rarely seen in this world, the first one of many similar ones held by Christian martyrs in the dungeons. But suddenly a great earthquake rocked the prison, with such force as to shake its very foundations. And as a result of the shaking not only were all the doors opened at that same moment, but also the fetters of all the prisoners were loosened, taken off. The Lord of the Christians is stronger than the enemies that attempt to murder His servants. It is an easy matter for Him to save them that are His own. The jailer, awakened from his sleep by the shock, came to the full realization of the situation with one sudden shock. One glance sufficed to show him the open doors of the prison, and since he concluded that the prisoners must surely have escaped, he drew his sword from its sheath with the intention of committing suicide; for death was the penalty for allowing prisoners to escape. All this, of course, did not occur without some commotion and outcry, a fact which quickly informed Paul of the situation, who thereupon with a loud voice both hindered the proposed suicide and gave the jailer the reassurance which was most apt to restore his self-control: Do nothing of harm to yourself; all of us are here. Not one of the prisoners had made an attempt to escape, though there was nothing to hinder them. It was either that they were panic-stricken on account of the earthquake, or that the behavior of Paul and Silas had so deeply impressed them that they were lost in admiration of the courage exhibited by the two tortured prisoners. Many of them undoubtedly saw a connection between the prayer of the apostles and the earthquake, and were moved to admire the almighty power of God.

The conversion of the jailer: V. 29. **Then he called for a light, and sprang in, and came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas,** v. 30. **and brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved?**

V. 31. And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved and thy house. V. 32. And they spake unto him the Word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house. V. 33. And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and was baptized, he and all his, straightway. V. 34. And when he had brought them into his house, he set meat before them, and rejoiced, believing in God with all his house. In the excess of his first terror, the keeper of the prison had not even thought of a torch, being concerned only about the prevention of any escape on the part of the prisoners. But now he called to the guards to provide lights, and rushed into the inner prison, and in a state of the greatest emotion and terror, from anguish of conscience and the fear of the supernatural, fell down before Paul and Silas. He probably remembered now that Paul, who had called to him, had been preaching salvation in the name of Jesus, and he assumed that there must be some connection between the rocking of the earth and the calm assurance of the apostle. The jailer therefore led Paul and Barnabas outside and asked them what he must do to be saved, the most important question which a man may possibly think of in his whole life. And this question of troubled and terrified souls must always be met with the answer as here: Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved and thy house. Paul and Silas did not accept the title "lords," but pointed the inquirer to the one true Lord and Master over all, in whom alone there is salvation. Faith in Jesus Christ delivers from death, hell, wrath, and judgment, and brings eternal salvation. Having given the jailer the great central thought and doctrine of the entire Christian religion, the missionaries now explained the way of salvation more fully, telling him and proclaiming to him the Word of the Lord, together with all those that belonged to his household, children and servants, freedmen and slaves. It was a brief, but comprehensive instruction preceding baptism. And so deeply was the man's heart moved by the events of the night and by the voice of God in these events that he took the two prisoners in that same hour of the night, — for he could not wait to fulfil this necessary duty till morning, — and washed off their stripes, both to remove the clotted blood and to ease the smarting of the blows. And Paul and Silas, in turn, gave to both the jailer and all the members of his household a washing to remove all the stains on their souls, by baptizing them all without delay. This Sacrament assured to the poor, harrowed man the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, which he needed so greatly on account of the feeling of guilt and damnableness which had come upon him with the realization of his sin. Now the jailer took both Paul and Silas into his house as honored guests; the table was set for them and a meal served altogether unlike that which they had gotten in prison. And the jailer rejoiced greatly, with intense, exulting gladness, in which all the members of his household joined him, that faith in God had been worked in their hearts. The fact that the Lord works faith in the heart of any person, and also makes him willing to give evidence of such faith in deeds of kindness and brotherly love, is a source of continual rejoicing to every Christian.

The release of the prisoners: **V. 35. And when it was day, the magistrates sent the sergeants, saying, Let those men go. V. 36. And the keeper of the prison told this saying to Paul, The magistrates have sent to let you go; now therefore depart and go in peace. V. 37. But Paul said unto them, They have beaten us openly uncondemned, being Romans, and have cast us into prison; and now do they thrust us out privily? Nay, verily; but let them come themselves and fetch us out. V. 38. And the sergeants told these words unto the magistrates; and they feared when they heard that they were Romans. V. 39. And they came and besought them, and brought them out, and desired them to depart out of the city. V. 40. And they went out of the prison, and entered into the house of Lydia; and when they had seen the brethren, they comforted them and departed.** In the morning a peculiar surprise came to the imprisoned missionaries. For hardly had the day dawned when the *duoviri*, or praetors, of the city sent the lictors to the prison with the order to dismiss the prisoners. The lictors were the police officers of the Roman magistrates, the insignia of their office being a bundle of rods tied around a hatchet. Whether the earthquake had caused the authorities to believe that they had offended some god on the day before, or whether on second thought their treatment of the apostles seemed to them too hasty and severe, or whether they believed that their purpose had been accomplished in silencing the clamor of the mob, cannot be determined from the text. Enough that the jailer informed the prisoners of the gracious order that the praetors had sent word to release them. And he was glad to give them their liberty and have them go forth in peace, without further molestation. The order of the *duoviri* had been given in haughty and contemptuous terms; as transmitted and paraphrased by the jailer, the words were a kind announcement and invitation to accept the gift of liberty. But now Paul refused to leave the prison. In the clamor and tumult of the assault on the previous day he had not gotten a chance to make himself heard, even if he had made the attempt. But now he makes a very serious charge against the magistrates of the city. Although he and Silas were Roman citizens, the praetors had both caused them to be beaten in public, not only uncondemned, but even without trial, without in-

vestigating the case,64) and had also thrown them into prison. According to the laws of Rome, Roman citizens were exempted from stripes and torture, and the violation of the rights of citizens was regarded as treason and, as such, severely punished. And after all these outrages, which Paul might very well have repaid with a summary vengeance, if he had not been a Christian, Rom. 12, 19, the praetors proposed to turn them out of the prison secretly? Indeed not! The least the praetors must do was to come and lead them out, as one form of apology. When the lictors reported these statements to the praetors, the latter were thoroughly frightened, and with good reason, wherefore they lost no time in coming personally, in apologizing and earnestly entreating the apostles to be satisfied. They then conducted them out of the prison and begged them, courteously requested them, to leave the city of their own free will. Paul and Silas accepted the apology and got ready to leave the city, but without undue and suspicious hurry. They first went to the house of Lydia, which may have become a meeting-place of the disciples that had been gained. Here they saw the brethren, comforted and encouraged them, and then left Philippi. Note: It was not only the sense of justice which made Paul insist upon some form of public apology, but also the fact that the public disgrace to which he and Silas had been subjected might seriously hinder the spread of the Gospel-message, on account of the prejudice which many people might have against a man that had been beaten in public. In our days also we Christians should be perfectly willing to suffer wrong and shame, but under circumstances, especially if the course of the Gospel is endangered, it is altogether in accordance with God's will that we insist upon our rights as citizens. We may find it imperative to insist upon recognition as honest and desirable members of the community.

Summary. *Paul and Silas make a visitation and missionary trip through Asia Minor and are then directed by the Spirit to Macedonia, where they begin their labors in the city of Philippi.*

64) Ramsay, *St. Paul the Traveler and Roman Citizen*, 225; Moulton and Milligan, *Vocabulary*, sub voce.

VISION, DREAM, AND REVELATION.

(Theophany and Angelophany.)

One of the features of Bible history, both in the Old and in the New Testament, is the matter-of-fact reference which the holy writers make to special revelations of the Lord by means of appearances, visions, and dreams. In practically every case of this kind which has been recorded, these appearances were attended by extraordinary, immediate communications of God to men, usually regarding some event which was to take place in the near future. The Bible itself speaks of these extraordinary revelations, making a distinction between true and false dreams and visions. "If there be a prophet among you, I, the Lord, will make Myself known unto him in a vision, and will speak unto him in a dream," Num. 12, 6. "Your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions," Joel 3, 28. The manner of testing whether a prophet be true or false is described in Deut. 13. "They prophesy unto you a false vision and divination, and a thing of naught, and the deceit of their heart," Jer. 14, 14; 23, 16.

In some cases, God Himself appeared, either in a voice, in some visible form, or in a more or less tangible image in a vision or in a dream. Moses was privileged above all the people of Israel on account of the manner in which the Lord communicated with him. "My servant Moses is not so, who is faithful in all Mine house. With him will I speak mouth to mouth, even apparently, and not in dark speeches; and the similitude of the Lord shall he behold," Num. 12, 7. 8. To Abram the Lord spoke in a vision, Gen. 15, 1, also to Jacob in the visions of the night, Gen. 46, 2. In the case of Samuel it was a vision in a dream, 1 Sam. 3. To Solomon the Lord appeared in a dream by night, 1 Kings 3, 5. A large part, if not all, of the prophecy of Isaiah was received by him in a vision, Is. 1, 1. The Lord spoke to Ananias of Damascus in a vision, Acts 9, 10.

Although they are closely related to the foregoing, a special class may be made of the appearances of the "Angel of the Lord," the revelations of the second person of the Godhead, the "Angel of the covenant," in the Old Testament. The Lord appeared to Abraham in the plains of Mamre, Gen. 18, 1. 17, and rained brimstone and fire upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah, Gen. 19, 24. The Angel of the Lord found Hagar in the wilderness, Gen. 16, 7. 9. He appeared to Moses at various times, Ex. 3, 2; 14, 19; Acts 7, 30. Gideon saw Him when he was threshing wheat by the wine-press, Judg. 6, 11. 12. To Manoah and his wife the Angel of the Lord predicted the birth of Samson, Judg. 13. He gave a command to Elijah the Tishbite, 2 Kings 1, 3.

From these visions and revelations, which are properly termed theophanies (appearances of God) we distinguish angelophanies (appearances of angels) either in dreams or in an ordinary meeting, face to face. Thus the Angel Gabriel appeared to Zacharias in the Temple, Luke 1, 22, and to Mary in her home, Luke 1, 27. To Joseph an angel of the Lord spoke repeatedly in a dream, Matt. 1, 20; 2, 13. 19. The warning of God to the wise men was also given in a dream, Matt. 2, 12. That the "man from Macedonia" in the passage above, Acts 16, 9, was an angel seems fairly certain.

A final form of communication or extraordinary revelation was that by means of visions in the strictest sense, when the senses of the person concerned were affected in some unusual way and he was in a state of transport, or ecstasy. This was the case with Peter at

Joppa, Acts 11, 5. It was probably also the condition of Paul at the time of his conversion, Acts 9; 22; 26. He himself describes such an ecstatic vision when he was caught up into paradise and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for man to utter, 2 Cor. 12, 2, 4. Into this class belongs also the vision which John had when he received the information and saw the pictures which he has recorded in the Book of Revelation.

It is well to remember, in connection with the many dreams in our days, for which people seek and receive explanations from mediums, fortune-tellers, etc., what Luther says: "Therefore we should not believe the dreams, nor explain them as it seems well to our reason, but leave it to God, as Joseph says, Gen. 40, 8. Although they are common to both Christians and Gentiles, yet no one knows what they mean unless the Holy Ghost also explains them. As Peter, 2 Ep. 1, 20, commands that we should not believe any explanation in spiritual things, unless it be from God. . . . Therefore, dreams may come and dreams may go: do you not interpret them; let God make it sure, be not sure of thyself." 65)

65) Luther, 8, 1023. 1024.

CHAPTER 17.

Paul and Silas in Thessalonica and Berea.

Acts 17, 1—14.

Preaching at Thessalonica: V. 1. **Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where was a synagog of the Jews;** v. 2. **and Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three Sabbath-days reasoned with them out of the Scriptures,** v. 3. **opening and alleging that Christ must needs have suffered and risen again from the dead; and that this Jesus, whom I preach unto you, is Christ.** V. 4. **And some of them believed, and consorted with Paul and Silas, and of the devout Greeks a great multitude and of the chief women not a few.** As the change of pronouns at this point indicates, Luke remained at Philippi, and it may be that Timothy remained there with him. There was much to be done in establishing the congregation and in organizing it for successful work, and these two disciples labored with great success in bringing about stable conditions. But Paul and Silas traveled toward the southwest, first of all to Amphipolis, thirty-three miles from Philippi, the capital of this district, but second in importance to the metropolis. The missionaries did not stop in this city, probably because there was no synagog there, but pushed on, first to Apollonia, thirty miles farther along the coast, and then to Thessalonica. They went along the Roman military road, the famous Egnatian Way, which ran for a distance of five hundred miles from the Hellespont to Dyrrachium on the Adriatic. The two intermediate places are probably mentioned as Paul's resting-places for the night. Thessalonica, formerly called Thermae, situated at the head of the Thermaic Bay, was during Roman times the capital of the second of the four districts of the province of Macedonia, the largest as well as the most populous city in the province, a great commercial center. The city, now known as Saloniki, is important to this day. Paul, with his usual wisdom and foresight, chose this center of civilization and government in the district as a place from which the Gospel-message might radiate in every direction. Here was also a synagog of the Jews, and the apostle continued his method of choosing the Hellenist Jews as the medium through which he might reach the Gentiles. According to his custom, therefore, Paul went in unto them, he visited their congregation in the synagog. For three Sabbaths, and during the week when there was an assembly of the Jews, and thus for a matter of almost four weeks, he reasoned or argued with them from the Scriptures, basing all his remarks upon the acknowledged canonical text of the Old Testament. His method was to open up the meaning of the Scriptures, to explain them by bringing forward the proof-passages, and thus to set forth clearly the connection between prophecy and fulfilment. He showed the progress of prophecy concerning Christ; he proved clearly that Christ had to suffer, that this was predicted, and was an essential mark of the true Messiah; and he explained that, according to prophecy, it was just as necessary for Christ to rise from the dead. Then he applied the prophecy to Jesus of Nazareth, showed the exact fulfilment, and presented the conclusion that this same Jesus whom he preached could be none other than the Messiah. This form of argument, effective at all times in preaching the Gospel, was especially demanded by the position of the Jews, to whom the cross and the crucifixion was an offense and a stumbling-block, and their prejudices had to be removed by a convincing presentation based upon their acknowledged Scriptures. And Paul's method was fully justified by the results: some of the hearers were persuaded and associated with Paul and Silas as disciples of the faith, not only Jews, but also of the God-fearing Greeks, the proselytes of the gate, a large multitude, and even a considerable number of the leading women of the city, such as were socially prominent. The prominence assigned to women in Macedonia is altogether in accord with the best historical accounts. The preaching of Jesus Christ, the Crucified and Resurrected, on the basis of the Bible, is the one means of gaining

true converts for Christ and His kingdom, and must never be replaced by the methods in vogue at the present time, by which Jesus Christ is relegated to a very hazy and obscure background, methods which are altogether out of harmony with the dignity of the Gospel, and will never result in real additions to the Church.

The tumult raised by the Jews: V. 5. **But the Jews which believed not, moved with envy, took unto them certain lewd fellows of the baser sort, and gathered a company, and set all the city on an uproar, and assaulted the house of Jason, and sought to bring them out to the people.** V. 6. **And when they found them not, they drew Jason and certain brethren unto the rulers of the city, crying, These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also;** v. 7. **whom Jason hath received; and these all do contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, one Jesus.** V. 8. **And they troubled the people and the rulers of the city when they heard these things.** V. 9. **And when they had taken security of Jason and of the other, they let them go.** The experience which Paul had had in Pisidian Antioch, chap. 13, 50, was here repeated. The great mass of the Jews refused to believe his message, and these men became violently jealous, not only on account of the preaching of the Messiah, but also because of the success which attended the efforts of Paul and Silas. So they resorted to methods which are often employed by men of their stamp. They went to the forum and got hold of some of the idle, pettifogging lawyers, a pest then as now, market-place agitators,[66] always ready for any kind of mischief. With their aid they soon gathered a mob of hoodlums and set the city in an uproar. It was a typical case of mob rule, with the authorities indifferent or helpless. They stormed the house of Jason, where the apostles were lodging, or where the Christian assemblies were held; their main intention was to bring out Paul and Silas to the people, to the free assembly of all the people as a political party with executive rights. The thoughts upon which this movement was based may well have been that the entire populace could be swayed to take summary vengeance on the missionaries then and there. But since they did not find Paul and Silas, they dragged Jason and some of the other Christians out before the politarchs of the city (for that is the title which the rulers of this city bore).[67] Their charge against these men, which they literally bawled out in their baffled rage, was given a political tinge, namely, that Jason had received into his house and was harboring some dangerous political agitators, men that had upset the whole world, caused disturbances throughout the Roman Empire, and had now come here. Insurrectionists all of them were, men that were always acting contrary to the decrees of Caesar pertaining to treason by declaring that another man is king, one Jesus. It was the same accusation which had been made in the case of Jesus, Luke 23, 2, and it came upon the disciples in accordance with the prediction of Jesus that His disciples must expect to share the lot of the Master. The fact that the kingdom of Christ is not of this world, and that its subjects never interfere with temporal power and government so long as they are conscious of their distinction, was not understood or was deliberately ignored by the accusers. And their bold statement succeeded in exciting both the people and the politarchs, since the charges pointed to the possibility of a revolution unless measures were taken at once to suppress the movement. The result was that Jason, having only entertained the missionaries, was not punished personally, but the politarchs obliged him to give bond in a large amount to keep the peace of the city, as also the other disciples that had been haled into court, after which they were released. The enemies of Christ use both subtlety and force in their ceaseless endeavor to hinder the preaching of the Gospel; but the Lord directs the affairs of His kingdom for the salvation of men.

Preaching in Berea: V. 10. **And the brethren immediately sent away Paul and Silas by night unto Berea, who, coming thither, went into the synagog of the Jews.** V. 11. **These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the Word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily whether those things were so.** V. 12. **Therefore many of them believed; also of honorable women which were Greeks, and of men, not a few.** V. 13. **But when the Jews of Thessalonica had knowledge that the Word of God was preached of Paul at Berea, they came thither also and stirred up the people.** V. 14. **And then immediately the brethren sent away Paul to go, as it were, to the sea; but Silas and Timotheus abode there still.** If Paul and Silas had continued their work in Thessalonica after the events of that day, they would not only have risked personal violence to themselves, but would also have caused Jason and the other disciples to forfeit their bond. And so they suffered it that the brethren quickly, that very night, sent them off to Berea, a small city in a mountainous district, almost fifty miles southwest of Thessalonica. The reception of the Gospel in this city differed very radically from that which had been accorded to it in the metropolis of the province; for when the apostles arrived there, they went in, they betook themselves to the synagog of the Jews, the Jewish population

66) Cobern, *The New Archeological Discoveries*, 129.

67) Barton, *Archeology and the Bible*, 438.

being strong enough to support such an institution. And here the people, both Jews and Greeks, were more generous of mind than in Thessalonica; they were not possessed of the strife and envy of the Thessalonian Jews, they entertained nobler sentiments, they made use of greater tact and fairness. This fact they showed not only by their cheerful, unconditional willingness to accept the Word which Paul brought, but also by the earnestness and zeal with which they carefully searched the Scriptures every day, comparing prophecy and fulfilment and satisfying their own minds that the doctrine, as represented by Paul, agreed with the revelation of God. As a result of this conscientious examination, under the Lord's guidance, many of them came to faith in Jesus the Savior, together with a considerable number of prominent Greeks, both women and men. Note: The fault which must be deplored more than any other in our days is the refusal of unbelievers and critics to examine the claims of the Gospel patiently and candidly. Their ignorance, therefore, will not be accepted as an excuse, but will prove all the more damaging in their final condemnation. And for those that profess to be disciples of Christ it affords the greatest joy to search the Scriptures and find the manifold evidences of God's truth and power.

But this pleasant and profitable relationship in Berea was soon disturbed. The news of Paul's activity came to the attention of the Thessalonian Jews that had created the uproar in that city. The fact that Paul was proclaiming the Word of God in Berea was evidently a crime of the first magnitude in their estimation, just as it is in the eyes of many enemies of the Gospel to-day. They therefore made a special trip to Berea in order to agitate the crowds, to create uproar and disturbance. Down to the present day, as recent events have shown, this method seems to enjoy great favor with such as would stamp out the pure preaching of the Gospel. Before the riots, however, were actually incited, before any serious outbreaks of mob-rule took place, the brethren, the members of the little congregation that had been formed, quickly sent Paul off on his journey to the sea. It was against him that the attacks were chiefly directed, and he must be spared for further work in the Lord's vineyard. It was some consolation to Paul, then, to have Silas and Timothy remain in Berea and do further work in establishing the young congregation.

Paul in Athens. Acts 17, 15—34.

The arrival and the first discussions: V. 15. **And they that conducted Paul brought him unto Athens; and receiving a commandment unto Silas and Timotheus for to come to him with all speed, they departed.** V. 16. **Now, while Paul waited for them at Athens, his spirit was stirred in him when he saw the city wholly given to idolatry.** V. 17. **Therefore disputed he in the synagog with the Jews and with the devout persons and in the market daily with them that met with him.** V. 18. **Then certain philosophers of the Epicureans and of the Stoics encountered him. And some said, What will this babbler say? other some, He seemeth to be a setter forth of strange gods; because he preached unto them Jesus and the resurrection.** V. 19. **And they took him and brought him unto Areopagus, saying, May we know what this new doctrine, whereof thou speakest, is?** V. 20. **For thou bringest certain strange things to our ears; we would know, therefore, what these things mean.** V. 21. **(For all the Athenians and strangers which were there spent their time in nothing else but either to tell or to hear some new thing.)** The solicitude of the Berean disciples would not permit them to leave their beloved teacher travel without an escort, and some of them therefore volunteered to accompany him to a place of safety. The original intention seems to have been to conduct Paul down to the coast and have him wait there in some port until Silas and Timothy could join him once more. There he could be ready for flight across the sea at a moment's notice. But this plan for some reason did not prove feasible, and therefore Paul's friends conducted him all the way to Athens. This city was one of the most famous cities of the world, situated in Greece, the Roman province of Achaia, on the Attic peninsula, five miles northeast of the Saronic Gulf, and connected with its seaport Piraeus by long walls. On the hill, called the Acropolis, stood the famous temple Parthenon, and other beautiful public buildings crowned other eminences. Athens was no longer the political capital of Greece at that time, but continued to be its literary center, as it was that of the entire civilized world for several centuries after. But in spite of all its learning and philosophy, which was the boast of its proud citizens, the city had fallen a prey to social decay and moral rottenness. "In Athens itself, where flourished the most profound philosophy, the most glowing eloquence, the most exquisite poetry, and the most refined creative art which the world has ever seen, there was the most complete and studied abandonment to every vice which passion could prompt or imagination invent." 68) Having arrived at Athens, Paul dismissed the brethren that had accompanied him with the charge to Silas and Timothy to join him as quickly as possible. But while Paul was waiting for his assistants in Athens, he was by no means idle. As he wandered up and down the streets of the famous city, he was violently agitated and filled with anger, severely provoked, his spirit was so stirred up in him, be-

68) McGarvey, *New Commentary on Acts*, II, 118.

cause he saw that the entire city was full of idols; it was a feature which distinguished Athens among all the cities of Greece. Thousands of figures of gods and goddesses were erected along the streets, and many altars invited the sacrifices of such as still believed in the ancient form of Greek religion. The apostle's extreme vexation over these conditions, and his earnest desire to expose such heathenish errors, caused him to reason and argue not only in the synagog, with the Jews and the proselytes whom he could meet there, but also daily on the forum, in the market-place of the city. This was not a bare or vacant lot in the middle of the town, but was surrounded with beautiful porticoes ornamented with sculpture work by famous artists, where the learned men of the day came together for philosophical discussions, and the philosophic schools had their meeting-halls. The *Stoa Poikile* was on one side, where the philosophic school of the Stoics met, and the gardens of Epicurus were not far away, the one school teaching absolute resignation to fate, the other proclaiming intellectual and sensual enjoyment in every form. But it made no difference to Paul, who reasoned with chance comers on the market-place as well as with the members of these philosophical schools. The disputes sometimes took the form of formal encounters, heated debates, as Paul tried to convince these philosophers. And their comments upon his efforts were not at all flattering. Some jeeringly inquired what this babbler was trying to say. The meaning of this strange epithet which was applied to Paul has been made clear by recent discoveries, for it is applied to one that picks up scraps and crumbs thrown into the streets. "It evidently meant to these learned Athenians that Paul, notwithstanding his claims, was not an original philosopher, but was a picker-up of certain scraps of philosophy which had been thrown away by authorized and properly educated teachers." 69) Others sneeringly remarked that Paul seemed to be a proclaimer of foreign demons, of novel and strange divinities, of gods that had never been heard of before. This last remark was occasioned by the fact that the apostle had preached to them the Gospel-news: Jesus and the resurrection. Note: whether we are dealing with the self-righteousness of Jews or with the wisdom of Greeks, there is always and only one duty before us, to preach the Gospel of the crucified and resurrected Christ. Finally the matter came to a crisis. The men with whom Paul was debating took him and brought him to the Areopagus, with the remark in the form of a question whether it would be possible for them to find out what this novel teaching as proclaimed by him was about. Paul did not speak about a doctrine, but he actually preached the Christian doctrine. Strange, novel matters they were which he was bringing in to their ears, startling and bewildering to people proud of their human philosophy; they were therefore determined to know what meaning they wanted to convey. Luke adds, by way of explanation, that all the Athenians, the natives of the city as well as the foreigners who resided in the city for a time, had leisure for nothing else, found no occupation more pleasant or fascinating, than that of reporting or hearing something new, novel, out of the ordinary, something to tickle their jaded intellects; the very latest news in philosophy and science was their choicest morsel. Note: The world of letters in our days has changed in appearance, but not in kind. The eternal verities of the Bible are despised as stale prattling, but every new theory of true and false science, be its argumentation never so tenuous, is hailed with delight and all too often set up as an irrefutable law.

The first part of Paul's speech: V. 22. **Then Paul stood in the midst of Mars Hill and said, Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious.** V. 23. **For as I passed by and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, To the Unknown God. Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, Him declare I unto you.** V. 24. **God, that made the world and all things therein, seeing that He is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands,** v. 25. **neither is worshiped with men's hands, as though He needed anything, seeing He giveth to all life and breath and all things;** v. 26. **and hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation,** v. 27. **that they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after Him, and find Him, though He be not far from every one of us;** v. 28. **for in Him we live, and move, and have our being, as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also His offspring.** Paul had been placed by those men that conducted him and now stood in the midst of the Council, or Court, of Areopagus. "The Areopagus was, in ancient times, a judicial council of Athens which held its meetings on the 'hill of Mars,' a little west of the Acropolis, which is in full view from its summit. On the top of this hill can still be seen the rock benches on which the Areopagites sat in the open air, and the two great rocks on which the accused prisoners sat. But it is not certain that Paul was officially tried before this ancient court. He may have been taken to this place as the most appropriate spot at which to address quietly an interested audience, or this may have been merely an informal inquiry made by the members of the court concerning his teaching. Yet from all the evidence available it seems certain that this

69) Cobern, *The New Archeological Discoveries*, 489.

council had the right to pass upon the qualifications of all lecturers either in the university or in the city, and the official arrest of this unauthorized lecturer is by no means impossible." 70) But whether the council heard Paul formally or informally, whether he spoke on the hill adjoining the Acropolis or in one of the great halls near the forum (*Stoa Basileios*), where the people had a better opportunity of hearing him, his address before this select company of the world's foremost wise men was an uncompromising stand for repentance and faith. He addresses the assembly in the customary manner as "Men of Athens." That they were a very religious people (literally, demon-fearing in a very high degree) he had observed, so it appeared to him to be; they carried their religious reverence very far. For as he was wandering through the streets of their city and making it a point to consider with attentive interest their objects of religious veneration, the temples, groves, altars, statues which they considered sacred, he had found also an altar with the inscription: To an Unknown God; an epigraph since found on at least one altar, and referred to occasionally in ancient writings. There can be no doubt, on the basis of Rom. 1, 18—20, for which many parallels from secular sources may be adduced,71) that many heathen felt the insufficiency and the inadequacy of their religion. Their natural knowledge of God led them to doubt, and often to condemn, the idolatry as practised by their own people, and should have prompted them to search so long until they had found the revelation of the true God; for there never was a time in the history of the world in which the worship of the God of heaven was not proclaimed somewhere. The altars to the unknown God seem to have been a semiconscious admission of the vanity and emptiness of idolatry. The Athenians thus worshiped what they knew not; they acknowledged with reverence a divine existence which was nameless to them. But what they thus worshiped devoutly, without knowing it, Paul proclaimed to them.

After this short introduction, Paul set forth the true God to them, that they might both know His name and knowingly reverence Him. The God that made the world, the created universe, and everything it contains, He, natural Lord as He is of heaven and earth, does not make His dwelling in temples made by the hands of men. Paul deliberately contrasts the true God with the idols whose dwelling was in temples made with hands, and whose statue often filled only a small niche of such a temple. The true God is also not served or worshiped with gifts or sacrifices made by the hands of men, as though He did not possess perfection and a full measure of everything, but was still in need of something. It is rather, on the contrary, He Himself who gives life and breath to all men, and all things which they are in need of. To attempt to dispense to the Giver of all good gifts what He Himself has always possessed is obviously a foolish proceeding, since the very life of men, as well as their continued existence, depends upon Him alone. And this almighty Creator made out of one, by making Adam the father of the entire human race, every race of people for the purpose of dwelling on the entire face, in every part, of the earth. There is no need of theory and guess-work, of false philosophy; Adam is, by the will of God, the ancestor of the entire human race. And this same God has also fixed, determined, the times that were appointed beforehand and the boundaries of the abodes of men. By His will and arrangement there are periods during which nations may retain possession of the territory which they have occupied, and there are points of time when they shall be dispossessed. Thus God, who has created all men, also controls the history of all nations. And the purpose which God has in thus manifesting His almighty power and providence is that men should seek the Lord, if by any means their minds might grasp some of His essence and they might thus find Him. They should be induced to obtain the very knowledge of God which Paul is here trying to impart to them. It may be a groping, as that of a blind man, and with all efforts it would result in only partial recognition of the essence of God; but it would lead onward, and should then be supplemented by the knowledge of revelation. For He, the Creator, is not far from every single human being, His personal presence is with every one of His creatures, not with any idea of pantheism, but with a personal relationship which shows His tender care for every single life. It is in Him that all men live, and move, and exist, are personal beings. If it were not for God who sustains us, we could not give evidence of life, it would be impossible for us to move, we could, indeed, not even exist. The knowledge which Paul thus advanced might be gained even by a contemplation of the works of God, as passages from the Greek poets tended to show, which Paul briefly quotes: For we His offspring are. The words are found in the poems of Aratus and of Cleanthes, and were familiar to all that knew anything of Greek poetry. That Paul here applied words from a heathen poem to the true God should give all the less offense since the poets were undoubtedly voicing the natural knowledge of God, which they had strengthened by a careful observation of the world and its government. Thus Paul, basing his remarks upon the natural knowledge of a divine being which is found in the hearts of men even after the fall of man, had given his hearers some idea of the true God and of their relation to Him in creation and preservation. The same arguments

70) Cobern, *The New Archeological Discoveries*, 489. 490. Cp. Barton, *Archeology and the Bible*, 220.

71) *Theological Quarterly*, 10 (1906), 9 ff.

may well be applied under similar circumstances to this day.

The conclusion of Paul and the effect of his sermon: V. 29. **Forasmuch, then, as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device.** V. 30. **And the times of this ignorance God winked at, but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent,** v. 31. **because He hath appointed a day in the which He will judge the world in righteousness by that Man whom He hath ordained; whereof He hath given assurance unto all men in that He hath raised Him from the dead.** V. 32. **And when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked; and others said, We will hear thee again of this matter.** V. 33. **So Paul departed from among them.** V. 34. **Howbeit, certain men clave unto him and believed, among the which was Dionysius, the Areopagite, and a woman named Damaris, and others with them.** If his hearers have kept the facts in mind concerning the essence of God and the relation of men to God, so the argument of Paul runs, and if they accept the statement that men are the offspring of God, that they, as creatures of God, are sustained by His providence, then it follows that idol worship is altogether unworthy of the lofty descent of human beings. They must conclude not only against the worship of images, but also against the habit of thought which made such worship possible, as both foolish and senseless. It is not only an affront to God, but an insult to sound common sense to think that the Godhead is like gold or silver or stone, fashioned and sculptured by the art and produced according to the deliberation of a man. What a man's mind, his imagination, had designed, what the skill of his fingers had then executed in metal or marble, this surely could not be reasonably endowed with the qualities of the Deity! And in addition to this his hearers were to know that God had indeed overlooked the times of ignorance, not as though He had not punished the sins of the heathen, but that He showed great patience with and forbearance toward them in not punishing them in the degree which their idolatry had merited. Now, however, since the full revelation of God has been made in Jesus Christ, God demands a change of mind and of life, complete repentance on the part of all men; this message comes in the nature of an emphatic demand. They should give heed, therefore, since God has fixed, or set, a day in which He intends to judge the entire world, all men without exception, in righteousness, in such a way that every one will receive full justice. This judgment will be executed in the person of a Man, through a Judge whom God has appointed for that purpose, John 5, 22. But in the mean time God is offering faith to all men, having raised this man, Jesus Christ, from the dead. To all men without exception faith is brought near, is offered, the faith based upon the resurrection of Jesus Christ, made possible by that great miracle of God's grace. So the address of Paul ends in a triumphant burst of Gospel-preaching, intended to impress these Gentiles with the wonderful beauty of this message and to open their hearts for Christ. But the idea of a resurrection of the dead, so indissolubly connected with Christian teaching, was to these wise Athenians the acme of foolishness. As long as Paul had demonstrated the folly of their idolatrous worship, they had listened with respectful attention, but now that he brought the essential teaching of Christ, some of the men in the audience interrupted him with cries of derision, while others, rendered thoughtful by the powerful exposition, did not merely express a cold interest in the matters presented, but voiced their willingness to hear him again at some other time. They wanted some time to think over the truths which they had heard so far. So Paul left the assembly of the Court without further opposition. And the Word also in Athens was not without immediate fruit, for there were several people in the audience in whose hearts faith had been kindled, and who therefore joined Paul as his companions and as disciples of the Lord. Among these was a member of the Athenian Council, a man of distinction in the city, by the name of Dionysius, and a woman, very likely a foreign woman, well educated and influential, and a few others with them. In the midst of His enemies Christ reigns and gains victories, though proud Athens yielded only a few converts, 1 Cor. 1, 26. 27. Let all the wisdom and art of this world proudly exclaim in denunciation of the Gospel-truth, yet the foolishness of God is wiser than men; it teaches the heavenly wisdom which was revealed in Christ.

Summary. *Paul and Silas preach the Gospel in Thessalonica and Berea, Paul traveling ahead of his companions from the latter city to Athens, where he also preaches the truth of the Scriptures and faith in Jesus.*

CHAPTER 18.

Paul at Corinth. Acts 18, 1—17.

Aquila and Priscilla and the beginning of the work: V. 1. **After these things Paul departed from Athens and came to Corinth,** v. 2. **and found a certain Jew named Aquila, born in Pontus, lately come from Italy, with his wife Priscilla, (because that Claudius had commanded all Jews to depart from Rome,) and came unto them.** V. 3. **And because he was of the same craft,**

he abode with them and wrought; for by their occupation they were tent-makers. V. 4. And he reasoned in the synagog every Sabbath, and persuaded the Jews and the Greeks. V. 5. And when Silas and Timotheus were come from Macedonia, Paul was pressed in the spirit, and testified to the Jews that Jesus was Christ. V. 6. And when they opposed themselves, and blasphemed, he shook his raiment and said unto them, Your blood be upon your heads; I am clean; from henceforth I will go unto the Gentiles. Paul had intended to wait for Silas and Timothy in Athens, but conditions caused him to leave this city before they arrived. He departed, journeying out, away from Athens, the city that took no interest in the Gospel-message. A little more than forty miles west by a good Roman road, on the isthmus between Hellas and the Peloponnesus, lay the city of Corinth, the capital of the Roman province Achaia, and the center of government and commerce. It was a rich and beautiful city, some of whose temples and public buildings ranked with those of Athens. Its wealth came pouring in through its eastern harbor, Cenchreae, on the Saronic Gulf, and on the west by way of the Bay of Corinth. But with all its external beauty, its wealth and fame, Corinth had become a byword for vice and infamy, for corruption and licentiousness. Centuries before, the Phenicians had established the worship of the Semitic goddess Astarte on the Corinthian Acropolis, and the open consecration of shameless impurity in the service of this temple of Venus, as the Roman name has it, almost passes belief. Nevertheless, Paul was acting with careful calculation when he chose this city as a missionary station, for it was one of the knots on the line of communication, the point of convergence for many subordinate roads. At Corinth also Paul could follow his usual method of gaining access to the people, since the commercial advantages of the city had attracted many Jews, and there was a synagog with a flourishing congregation. After Paul had reached the capital of Achaia, he found, not by deliberate search, but by chance, — he ran across, — a Jew by the name of Aquila, who hailed from Pontus in Asia Minor, a province southeast of the Black Sea. This man had but recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, because the Roman emperor Claudius, in 50 A. D., had expelled all Jews from Rome by an imperial decree. So it must have been in the fall of this year that Paul met Aquila and his wife and made arrangements to lodge with them. Whether Priscilla was of high social rank, as has been conjectured, or not, and whether she had been the first to turn to Christ, or whether her husband had led her to the salvation which he had found first, cannot be definitely shown. But it is certain that she was very prominent in church-work, Rom. 16, 3; 1 Cor. 16, 19; 2 Tim. 4, 9, and that she had great fervency of spirit and much executive ability. The arrangement by which Paul boarded with these people proved to be mutually agreeable and satisfactory, for they were fellow-craftsmen, their trade being that of tent-makers. Very likely it was not necessary for them to weave their material themselves, since the finished product of Cilicia and other Asiatic provinces could easily be procured in a commercial city like Corinth. So Paul worked at his trade and earned his living during the week by the labor of his hands, chap. 20, 34. 35; 1 Thess. 2, 9; 2 Thess. 3, 8; 1 Cor. 4, 11. 12; 2 Cor. 11, 9; Phil. 4, 12; but on the Sabbath he followed his old custom of arguing in the synagog and trying to persuade both the Jews and the Greeks, the proselytes that attended the synagog worship. Whether Paul was ill at this time, or whether he lacked his usual fervor and aggressiveness: he seems, at any rate, not to have been able to make the usual impression upon his hearers. But with the coming of Silas and Timothy from Macedonia, who remained with him for at least a part of his stay, 2 Cor. 1, 19, being named also in the salutations of the two letters to the Thessalonians, a change occurred. Probably his two assistants brought him some financial support from the congregation at Thessalonica, for he was now entirely occupied with the teaching of the doctrine of salvation, devoting all his time and energy to preaching the Gospel as found in prophecy and fulfilment, and testifying with great power and success to the fact that Jesus is the Christ, the promised Messiah. As usual, this fearless proclamation precipitated a crisis. The Jews arrayed themselves in opposition to him and to his message; they not only abused Paul, but blasphemed his Gospel and the name of Christ. And therefore Paul solemnly and impressively shook out his mantle, shook the very dust of their synagog off his clothes for a testimony against them, telling them, at the same time, that their blood was upon their own heads, that they could hold no one but themselves responsible for their damnation. He knew that he was clean, innocent, free from guilt; he had done his full duty in their behalf. From that time forth he intended to go to the Gentiles. Whatever bloody end the inevitable divine punishment would bring to them they must ascribe entirely to their own hard-heartedness; his conscience absolved him from all further responsibility. Note: If all efforts to bring the Gospel to a certain region or city come to naught on account of the refusal of the inhabitants, the consequences of their opposition may well be announced to the people in terms similar to those used by Paul; for God is not mocked.

Success in preaching to the Gentiles: **V. 7. And he departed thence, and entered into a certain man's house named Justus, one**

that worshiped God, whose house joined hard to the synagog. V. 8. **And Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagog, believed on the Lord with all his house; and many of the Corinthians hearing believed, and were baptized.** V. 9. **Then spake the Lord to Paul in the night by a vision, Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace;** v. 10. **for I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee; for I have much people in this city.** V. 11. **And he continued there a year and six months, teaching the Word of God among them.** Having gone out from there, from the synagog, having departed, removed himself, from the midst of the blaspheming Jews, Paul was not long at a loss for a suitable meeting-place. He entered at once into the house of one Titus Justus, a God-fearing man, a proselyte, evidently a Roman citizen of some influence and means, through whom Paul could gain access to the educated classes of the city. The action of the Jews, therefore, instead of harming the apostle, redounded to the benefit of the Gospel, as often happens. The location of the house of Justus was also favorable, since it adjoined the synagog, and was thus convenient of access to both Jews and Greeks. And that not all the Jews joined in blaspheming the Gospel-message is apparent from the fact that the ruler of the Corinthian synagog, Crispus, in this crisis came forward boldly for the cause of the Lord; he believed on the Lord with his entire house, with all the members of his family and his household, his children and his servants, 1 Cor. 1, 14. And the movement gained in force, for many of the Corinthians, Gentiles, when they heard the Word, believed on the Lord Jesus Christ and were baptized. The spread of the new faith was gradual, but continuous. The decisive action of Paul in confessing his Lord had not hindered, but furthered the course of the Word. And he was now strengthened in his aggressive labor by a vision by night in which the Lord told him not to be afraid of the continued malicious opposition of the Jews nor of any other danger, but to continue speaking and testifying, and by no means to hold his peace, never to stop. And this command the Lord reenforced by the encouraging promise that He Himself, the almighty God, was with him, and that no one would lay hands upon him to do him harm. Any one under the protection of the Lord is more secure than if all the armies of the world were summoned and arrayed in his defense. And in Corinth, as the Lord said, He had a great many people who were yet to be gained by the preaching of the Gospel. God knew that His merciful will in their case would be carried out, that they would learn to believe in their Savior Jesus Christ. Thus the Lord, in the midst of the Corinthian people, whose moral plane was as low as that of any city in the empire, had chosen a congregation to be sanctified through the blood of Christ, by faith in His salvation. Christianity here wrought its miracle, as one commentator has it, for in Corinth the Gospel was put to a supreme test, and nowhere did it triumph more gloriously. And though God chiefly chose the lowly among the people, 1 Cor. 1, 26. 27, His call included also men of high station, a Crispus, a Gaius, a Stephanas, and an Erastus, the public treasurer of the city, Rom. 16, 23. With such splendid success attending his labors, Paul dwelt, settled, in Corinth for the time being; he carried on a quiet and settled work of establishing the congregation and seeing it grow in faith and sanctity, his entire stay consuming a year and six months. The Word of the Lord he preached, no foolish fancies of his own imagination or of man's philosophy; for the latter will never build the Church of Christ, no matter how attractively it may be presented.

The insurrection at the time of Gallio: V. 12. **And when Gallio was the deputy of Achaia, the Jews made insurrection with one accord against Paul, and brought him to the judgment-seat,** v. 13. **saying, This fellow persuadeth men to worship God contrary to the law.** V. 14. **And when Paul was now about to open his mouth, Gallio said unto the Jews, If it were a matter of wrong or wicked lewdness, O ye Jews, reason would that I should bear with you;** v. 15. **but if it be a question of words and names and of your law, look ye to it; for I will be no judge of such matters.** V. 16. **And he drave them from the judgment-seat.** V. 17. **Then all the Greeks took Sosthenes, the chief ruler of the synagog, and beat him before the judgment-seat. And Gallio cared for none of those things.** Gallio became proconsul of Achaia and took charge of the affairs of the province in the summer of 51 A. D., almost a year after Paul had come to Corinth. "Another proof of St. Luke's accuracy. Achaia from B. C. 27 (when it had been separated from Macedonia, to which it had been united since B. C. 146, and made into a separate province) had been governed by a proconsul. In A. D. 15 Tiberius had reunited it with Macedonia and Mysia, and it was therefore under an imperial *legatus* as an imperial province. But a further change occurred when Claudius, A. D. 44, made it again a senatorial province under a proconsul." 72) Evidently the Jews thought this a propitious time to inaugurate a tumult, for they arose against Paul with one accord, as one man, and led him to the judgment-seat of the proconsul. They may have thought that the new proconsul would want to make a favorable impression and gain the good will of all his subjects at once, and therefore would grant their request. Their charge against Paul was

72) *Expositor's Greek Testament*, II, 389.

that he, against the law, was persuading the people to worship God. The wording of the accusation showed great skill, for in a certain sense the word "law" might include both the Roman law and the Jewish law, the first being fixed by the government, the second being permitted by a special decree. In stating that Paul's teaching was illegal, they meant to convey the impression that he was spreading a prohibited religion, while in their own hearts they had reference only to their ceremonial law and to the traditions which they held sacred. So the Jews here made use of boldness mingled with cleverness. Paul was just about to open his lips to make a suitable reply to this sophistical charge when Gallio gave the Jews an answer which showed that he drew a hard and fast line between a charge of unlawful action against the state and against Jewish law and custom. He explained that if it were a case of an unlawful action, of a breach of state law, or if it were an actual crime, a moral wrong, with which they were charging Paul, he would sustain them, he would look into the case, according to right and justice. But so far as any discussion regarding a word and names of their law was concerned, they would have to see to that themselves; he did not propose to act as judge in such matters. Gallio was not altogether clear in his mind what the whole controversy was about; he may have heard some references to the Word of God, to the name of Jesus, to the customs and usages of the Jews. And it was not necessary for him, in his capacity as secular judge, to be familiar with these matters. But he certainly proved that the high praise bestowed upon him by the historians, in calling him a man of admirable integrity, amiable and popular, was not misplaced. In this he might well serve as an example to state officers everywhere, in showing them that the business of the state deals with transgressions of the second table of the Law only, and should not interfere with the exercise of religion. The prompt and energetic action of the proconsul, not only in rendering a clear opinion without the least delay, but also in dismissing the importunate Jews with some sharpness, in clearing the court, made a very favorable impression upon the people that were gathered in the forum, and turned the tide of popular prejudice in favor of Paul. The Greeks that were present immediately laid hold of Sosthenes, the successor of Crispus as the ruler of the synagog, and gave him a sound thrashing in full view of the judgment-seat, and Gallio took no official notice of the beating, assuming, no doubt, that there was some bitterness against the Jews which might find its vent in this comparatively harmless way. And thus, in accordance with the Lord's promise that no harm should befall the apostle, the purpose of Gallio to confine himself strictly to his business of proconsul was a means of saving Paul from persecution and probably even death.

The Return Trip to Antioch and the Beginning of the Third Journey.

Acts 18, 18—28.

From Corinth to Antioch: V. 18. **And Paul, after this, tarried there yet a good while, and then took his leave of the brethren, and sailed thence into Syria, and with him Priscilla and Aquila; having shorn his head in Cenchrea, for he had a vow.** V. 19. **And he came to Ephesus and left them there; but he himself entered into the synagog, and reasoned with the Jews.** V. 20. **When they desired him to tarry longer time with them, he consented not,** v. 21. **but bade them farewell, saying, I must by all means keep this feast that cometh in Jerusalem; but I will return again unto you, if God will. And he sailed from Ephesus.** V. 22. **And when he had landed at Caesarea, and gone up and saluted the church, he went down to Antioch.** After the unsuccessful uprising of the Jews, which must have occurred in the fall of 51 A. D., Paul remained in Corinth a matter of another half year, many days, as Luke reports, showing that there was no more difficulty, but that the Gospel could be preached freely. Then, however, he made his farewells to the brethren and embarked for Syria, he set about to make his voyage, with Syria as his goal. Priscilla and Aquila, his hosts and dear friends, accompanied him. Note that Luke places the woman's name first, as the more active and energetic in the work of the Lord. They went down to the eastern harbor of Corinth, the town of Cenchreae, first, for here the ships landed that carried on the trade with Asia. Before going aboard, Paul had his head shaved and took the hair along with him, for he had a vow which he intended to pay to the Lord, probably on the coming Passover festival in Jerusalem, Num. 6, 13—21.[73] He had been under a Nazirite's vow, and now resumed the regular cutting of his hair, which, according to special provisions intended to cover just such cases, could then be taken to the door of the Temple and burned there. Paul, as a Jew, still observed the customs of the Jewish law and tradition which did not interfere with the exercise of the Christian religion. In the same way Luther did not permit iconoclastic motives to govern him, but retained such customs of external worship as are not in themselves sinful. Sailing eastward from Cenchreae, Paul and his companions crossed the Aegean Sea, with its many beautiful and historic islands, a distance of some 250 miles, to Ephesus, the capital of the Roman province of Asia, a city which he had intended to visit in the beginning of the present journey. Here the apostle left his companions, who probably intended to stay here a while for the purpose of assisting in mission-work. Paul himself, while his ship was in the

73) Edersheim, *The Temple*, 374.

harbor for some days, could not deny himself the pleasure of visiting the synagog on the Sabbath, since he was desirous that others should partake of his hope of eternal salvation through the merits of Jesus. To this end he argued with the Jews from the Scriptures, not without making an impression upon them, for they begged him to remain there for a longer time. But he felt constrained to refuse the invitation and therefore bade them farewell, saying that he must by all means celebrate the coming festival, most likely that of the Passover, in Jerusalem. But he comforted them with the promise that he would return to them, if it was the will of God. Note the example which Paul sets with his conditional promise. Leaving Ephesus, Paul continued his voyage around the southwestern coast of Asia Minor, thence past the little isle of Rhodes in a southeasterly direction, leaving Cyprus on the left, till the ship reached Caesarea, the city of the centurion Cornelius. Without delay he made the trip up to the mountains where Jerusalem was located (altitude about 2,500 feet), saluted the congregation, paid his vow, attended the festival, but then left at once to travel overland down to Antioch, where he doubtless received a glad welcome from the church. It was the end of his second long missionary journey, on which he had been absent for almost three years.

The beginning of the third missionary journey: V. 23. **And after he had spent some time there, he departed and went over all the country of Galatia and Phrygia in order, strengthening all the disciples.** V. 24. **And a certain Jew named Apollos, born at Alexandria, an eloquent man, and mighty in the Scriptures, came to Ephesus.** V. 25. **This man was instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in the spirit, he spake and taught diligently the things of the Lord, knowing only the baptism of John.** V. 26. **And he began to speak boldly in the synagog; whom when Aquila and Priscilla had heard, they took him unto them, and expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly.** V. 27. **And when he was disposed to pass into Achaia, the brethren wrote, exhorting the disciples to receive him; who, when he was come, helped them much which had believed through grace;** v. 28. **for he mightily convinced the Jews, and that publicly, showing by the Scriptures that Jesus was Christ.** Paul had probably reached Antioch in the early summer of the year 52, but he did not spend much time there. His zeal for the Lord and the Gospel did not permit him to rest. Even before the heat of the summer set in, he was once more on the way, traveling overland over the same route which he had taken on the previous journey, chap. 15, 41, through Syria into Cilicia, and from there by way of the Gates of Cilicia into the Lycaonian plateau. Here he continued his missionary journey through Southern Galatia, in the districts of Lycaonia and Phrygia, through Derbe, Lystra, Iconium, and Pisidian Antioch. Judging from the rapidity of his journey, as indicated in the words of Luke, Paul must have found all the churches of these regions in such a condition that a longer visit on his part was not necessary. Still he made good use of every opportunity to admonish, encourage, and confirm all the disciples, urging them earnestly to cling to the faith in the Lord Jesus as it had been delivered to them. Paul, with his energy and with his capacity for work, is a model missionary for all times; he did not spare himself in the labor of his Lord. But while he was spending the latter part of summer and the early fall in the center of Asia Minor, events in Ephesus were preparing the way for his labors in that important city. For a certain Jew by the name of Apollos, an Alexandrian by birth, his parents and forefathers having lived in that Egyptian city for many years, thus making him a native of Alexandria, though a Jew by descent and education, came to Ephesus, settled there for a time. He was both eloquent and learned, and well read in the Scriptures; he was at home in them and could adduce the most important passages in any emergency and in the defense of any doctrine. This man had received catechetical instruction in the way of the Lord; he knew the divine plan of salvation which aimed at the redemption of Israel; while he was not acquainted with any other baptism but John's, he may have known a good deal of Christ's words and deeds as gained from such accounts as Egyptian Jews brought back from their visits to the Jewish capital. But what he lacked in accuracy of knowledge, he fully made up in fervor. He was burning in his spirit with zeal for the Lord, and he made it his regular custom to speak and teach the things concerning Jesus Christ with all accuracy; both in private conversation and in public discourse he set forth the facts which had been taught him as exactly as he could. Weak as he was in Christian knowledge, he began to speak freely even in the synagog, for he had the courage of his convictions. And Aquila and Priscilla, who had not found it necessary to separate themselves from their countrymen at Ephesus, hearing him speak, showed fine tact and solicitude in his behalf. They recognized his excellencies as well as his deficiencies, and therefore took him with them and set the way of the Lord before him with greater exactness, supplying what he still lacked in knowledge from the information which they had gained from Paul. That was a fine indication of the right spirit toward a brother that was still weak in knowledge; and the fact that Apollo accepted this service in the spirit in which it was rendered shows that he was not puffed up with pride over his abilities and knowledge. Some time afterwards, therefore,

after he had been thoroughly established in the full Christian knowledge, when he planned to go over into Achaia, to Corinth, for a stay of some time, the Christian brethren of Ephesus wrote a letter of recommendation for him, urging the disciples in the Greek capital to make him welcome. This service of love deserves to be imitated a little oftener in our days; for not only the relatives and close friends, but all Christian brethren should take an interest in the spiritual welfare of such as remove to a different part of the country. But the example of Apollo is also significant, for he at once sought out the brethren in Corinth, and in conference with them proved of great aid to them that had become believers by grace. What Paul had planted Apollo watered; but it was God that gave the increase. His grace worked faith in the hearts of the believers, as it does to this day. The success of Apollo's labors was due in no small measure to the fact that he powerfully, vehemently, argued down the Jews; he confuted them, even if he could not convince them; for before all the people, in public meetings, he demonstrated from the Scriptures, from the Old Testament writings as they were universally accepted by the Jews, that Jesus, the prophet of Nazareth, who was crucified at Jerusalem, could be no one else than the Christ, the Messiah of the world. It is a blessing, a gift of God, if a teacher of the Church has the ability to confute the gainsayers and to bring out the glorious facts of salvation with the proper force.

Summary. *Paul labors at Corinth under the special protection of God, returns to Antioch by way of Ephesus, Caesarea, and Jerusalem, and sets out upon his third missionary journey, Apollos doing some advance work for him in Ephesus.*

CHAPTER 19.

Paul's Work at Ephesus. Acts 19, 1—20.

Paul's arrival at Ephesus: V. 1. **And it came to pass that, while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul, having passed through the upper coasts, came to Ephesus; and finding certain disciples,** v. 2. **he said unto them, Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed? And they said unto him, We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost.** V. 3. **And he said unto them, Unto what, then, were ye baptized? And they said, Unto John's baptism.** V. 4. **Then said Paul, John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people that they should believe on Him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus.** V. 5. **When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.** V. 6. **And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them; and they spake with tongues and prophesied.** V. 7. **And all the men were about twelve.** While Apollos was in Corinth, having made the voyage across the Aegean after his stay in Ephesus, Paul, having finished his visitation trip in the upper, the mountainous, districts of Asia Minor, came down to Ephesus. Apparently Paul did not take the main road from Pisidian Antioch, which passed through Colossae and Laodicea (cp. Col. 2, 1), but took the very shortest route, farther north, down the Cayster Valley. So he found himself in Ephesus within the briefest possible time. Ephesus, the capital of Proconsular Asia, was, like Athens, a typical city of heathendom, the "home of every Oriental quackery and superstition in combination with its Hellenism." It stood a mile from the Aegean Sea, fronting an artificial harbor. On the hill above the city rose the Temple of Artemis, one of the most magnificent buildings in Asia Minor. For Paul's purposes it was especially valuable that the system of Roman roads from every quarter of the province made Ephesus easily accessible. Upon his arrival in the city the apostle found a peculiar, a singular condition obtaining in the congregation. Due to the efforts of Aquila, Priscilla, and Apollos, there was an assembly of brethren there, of men and women that accepted Jesus as their Savior; but there was a wide difference in the state of Christian knowledge. For Paul here found twelve men whom he proceeded to question as to the extent of their knowledge of Christian doctrines. One of his questions was whether they had received the Holy Ghost at the time when they became believers, the sense of the inquiry being whether they had received the extraordinary gift of the Holy Ghost which had been vouchsafed to so many converts. Their answer was rather surprising, for they stated that they had not even heard of the existence of a Holy Ghost in connection with their conversion. Upon Paul's further question into what, then, they had been baptized, that is, what form of baptism they had received, they answered that they had been baptized into the baptism of John. This answer showed Paul that they were lacking in the proper understanding, and he proceeded to give them the necessary instruction, namely, that John had baptized with the baptism of repentance, incidentally telling the people that they should believe on Him that was coming after him, that is, on Jesus Christ.[74] This explanation of

74) Both for grammatical and historical reasons, v. 5 cannot be regarded as belonging to Paul's words. Cp., however, *Syn.-Ber.*, Minn. Dist., 1912, 39.

Paul fully opened their understanding, and they received Baptism into the name of the Lord Jesus, thus being added to the number of those that belonged to Christ as His own. "The papyri have shown that where the phrase 'baptized into' occurs, that the person baptized becomes the property of the divine person indicated." 75) And when Paul, who seems to have performed the baptizing personally, laid his hands upon the men, the Holy Ghost came upon them with extraordinary gifts, and they spoke with tongues and prophesied.

The story of these twelve men, as here related, seems very strange if viewed in the light of present knowledge, but the strangeness disappears when we take the circumstances into account. The case is on the order of that of Apollos, whose ignorance of what certainly is an important part of Christian doctrine was just as profound. We must distinguish between the baptism which John personally administered, and that of his later disciples, which is commonly referred to as the baptism of John. The baptism with which John, by a special command of God, baptized, was a valid sacrament, which gave to those that confessed their sins, and believed the preaching of John, forgiveness of sins and the grace of God.76) But John the Baptist was merely the precursor of Christ; his preaching, as his baptism, was a testimony of Christ, who was to come after him, and who, through His suffering and death, was to earn salvation and forgiveness for all sinners. After Christ had been revealed to Israel and had formally entered upon His ministry, the time of preparation was ended, the work and the office of John ceased to have value. And when Christ then, by His death, had finished His work and after His resurrection had given His disciples the command to baptize all nations in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost; when, above all, the Day of Pentecost had come, and the disciples of the Lord were now baptizing in the name of Jesus Christ, the crucified and resurrected, then the baptism of John no longer had any value, just as the Old Testament sacrament of circumcision, though still practised by the Jewish Christians, was regarded as a mere ceremony.

But not all the disciples of John had entered into the discipleship of Christ. We find, even after the death of John and after the death of Christ, a small association or communion of disciples of John that did not unite with the Church. They thus became a sect, regarded John as their head, and acted contrary to the will and command of their own master. And therefore their baptism, which they performed and proclaimed as the continuation of the baptism of John, was no real baptism, but a mere dead ceremony. This ceremony had been performed in the case of the twelve disciples in Ephesus, the one that had administered it to them very likely not testifying to them in the form and with the power of John, that Christ had baptized with the Holy Ghost and with fire. But these men had now heard the story of Jesus in Ephesus; through the mercy and the power of the Holy Ghost they had come to faith. And now they also, by the administration of the sacrament which was the real Baptism, received the extraordinary gifts which had been given to other baptized Christians.77)

The success of the Gospel: V. 8. **And he went into the synagog, and spake boldly for the space of three months, disputing and persuading the things concerning the kingdom of God.** V. 9. **But when divers were hardened and believed not, but spake evil of that way before the multitude, he departed from them, and separated the disciples, disputing daily in the school of one Tyrannus.** V. 10. **And this continued by the space of two years, so that all they which dwelt in Asia heard the Word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks.** V. 11. **And God wrought special miracles by the hands of Paul,** v. 12. **so that from his body were brought unto the sick handkerchiefs or aprons, and the diseases departed from them, and the evil spirits went out of them.** Also in Ephesus Paul followed his usual method of going into the synagog of the Jews first and making a sincere attempt to win them for the kingdom of God. He spoke boldly, without reserve, in an altogether fearless manner. For three months he pursued this course of bringing the soundest arguments, the most persuasive points in regard to the kingdom of God. He preached that Kingdom, the fact that God wanted all men to enter into it by faith; he exerted all his strength to win souls for the Lord. But in spite of all his efforts some of the hearers hardened themselves; gradually, from day to day, they became more obstinate, more positive in their refusal to accept the message of the Gospel, 2 Cor. 2, 16. Finally they openly avowed their disbelief and reviled the way of the Lord, the doctrine and practise of Christianity, before the entire assembly that gathered in the synagog for worship. Cp. chap. 18, 6. This ungrateful and blasphemous behavior at length induced Paul to do two things. For himself, he renounced all fellowship with the synagog, and he separated all the disciples from the members of the Jewish congregation, with whom they had till now worshiped. And now, instead of meeting with the believers only once, or at the most three times a week, Paul could hold daily services. For he made arrangements to have the use of a lecture-hall belonging to one

75) Cobern, *The New Archeological Discoveries*, 229.

76) Pieper, *Christliche Dogmatik*, II, 338; *Syn. Ber.*, Minn. Distr., 1912, 36.

77) Stoeckhardt, *Biblische Geschichte des Neuen Testaments*, 387. 388.

Tyrannus, very likely a public teacher of philosophy or rhetoric. The time of services could easily be fixed so that all were able to attend and to bring many others to the preaching of the Gospel. And so satisfactory did this plan prove to be that it was followed, in an uninterrupted manner, for the space of two years. The results of such intensive work, under the leadership of such an energetic worker, were proportionately gratifying. Not only the city of Ephesus itself, but all the inhabitants of Proconsular Asia, of the entire province, both Jews and Greeks (speaking generally), heard the Word of the Lord. Either they personally came to Ephesus to hear the great preacher of Christianity, or they heard the Word from the many disciples that went out from the city. Owing to this great missionary effort, we later have seven churches of Asia, Rev. 1, 4, all within the territory of Ephesus. The effect of Paul's preaching was greatly enhanced by the fact that the Lord testified to it by special manifestations of His power. He performed extraordinary miracles through the hands of Paul, signs that were unusual even in those days of astonishing deeds. When the apostle could not come in person, people took his sudaries, or handkerchiefs, and his little aprons, such as he girded about him as a sort of girdle, garments that had come in contact with his skin, and brought them to the sick, the result being that the sicknesses left, and that the evil spirits went forth, a graphic way of describing the complete healing of all manner of afflictions. All of these people put their faith in the Lord, whose servant Paul was, and therefore received this evidence of the Lord's power. Note that Luke also here makes a distinction between sickness and demon possession.

The encounter with the exorcists: V. 13. **Then certain of the vagabond Jews, exorcists, took upon them to call over them which had evil spirits the name of the Lord Jesus, saying, We adjure you by Jesus whom Paul preacheth.** V. 14. **And there were seven sons of one Sceva, a Jew and chief of the priests, which did so.** V. 15. **And the evil spirit answered and said, Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are ye?** V. 16. **And the man in whom the evil spirit was leaped on them, and overcame them, and prevailed against them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded.** V. 17. **And this was known to all the Jews and Greeks also dwelling at Ephesus; and fear fell on them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified.** The success of Paul in expelling demons made a great impression upon some Jewish exorcists that were in Ephesus at that time. It seems that this form of demoniac healing was practised by certain wandering or strolling exorcists, who went from one city to another and attempted to drive out the evil spirits by adjuring them in the name of some prophet, the men in this instance being the seven sons of a Jew named Skeua, either the head of one of the twenty-four courses of priests at Jerusalem, or related to the high-priestly family. These men in the present case undertook to use the name of the Lord Jesus as a spell to charm with, to gain power over the evil spirit. Their formula, which they individually used, was: I adjure you by Jesus whom Paul preaches. It is a stratagem and deceit of the devil to use the Word of God, the name of God and the name of Jesus, to perform his dark and devilish tricks. It was an abuse of the name of God, a criminal, blasphemous game, which they were playing. But they found their punishment with unexpected suddenness. For the evil spirit in the man whom they were trying to heal answered them that he knew Jesus, was fully familiar with His power and authority, and that he was also acquainted with Paul, some other spirits having experienced the miraculous power that dwelt in him, but who might they be, to use the name of both in such an assured manner? That was an expression of sneering contempt, since the devil would not recognize their superiority and refused to heed their adjuration. And what is more: their self-satisfied assurance filled the evil spirit with fury. The man whose body he controlled sprang upon them like an infuriated beast, mastered them with the greatest ease (two of them being present upon this occasion), and overpowered them completely; they were like helpless infants in his hands. With their clothes torn from their bodies and covered with wounds they fled out of the house which they had entered with such great confidence. Instead of coming back in triumph, they crept back in shame and disgrace. And the story became known to all the inhabitants of Ephesus, both Jews and Greeks, causing fear to fall upon them all. As a consequence, the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified, was highly praised, and continued to receive praise from an increasing number of disciples. Thus the plans of the devil to hinder and interfere with the work of the Lord only result in the furtherance of His kingdom.

A further result of this event: V. 18. **And many that believed came and confessed, and showed their deeds.** V. 19. **Many of them also which used curious arts brought their books together, and burned them before all men; and they counted the price of them, and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver.** V. 20. **So mightily grew the Word of God and prevailed.** The beating which the exorcists received in consequence of their unwarranted use of the name of Jesus had a good effect also upon the disciples that had come to faith, that had joined the congregation at Ephesus. The fear that Jesus was mightier than all idols and demons was spread far and wide. Now, the city of Ephesus, like most of the large cities of that day, was full of witch-

craft and superstition. And this fact was here brought out in a remarkable way, since fear of punishment opened the mouth of many. They confessed, openly declared, their wrong-doings in this respect; they disclosed the magic spells which they had used. And many of those that had practised magical arts collected their books on these subjects, burning them openly, in the sight of all the people. They also computed the price of these books and found it to be fifty thousand pieces of silver, almost ten thousand dollars. "Their value depended not so much on their number or their size as on their contents; for they contained plainly written directions for the performance of tricks of jugglery and magic, and the purchaser, by a little practise, could be just as skilful a juggler as the original owner." So did the Word of the Lord grow with power, with such irresistible force did it persuade the hearts of men and gain new converts. And such strength did it exhibit in changing the hearts of these converts that they voluntarily renounced all connection with superstition and witchcraft. This power of God, even to-day, is exerted through the Word and shows the same results. The foolishness of men's perverted minds, together with the power of the kingdom of darkness, is helpless before the power of God in His Word.

The Tumult of Demetrius. Acts 19, 21—41.

Some plans of Paul: V. 21. **After these things were ended, Paul purposed in the spirit, when he had passed through Macedonia and Achaia, to go to Jerusalem, saying, After I have been there, I must also see Rome.** V. 22. **So he sent into Macedonia two of them that ministered unto him, Timotheus and Erastus; but he himself stayed in Asia for a season.** After these things had been accomplished, after the Gospel had scored this great victory over the powers of darkness and over the hearts of men, Paul made up his mind, not according to some temporary notion, but under the direction of the Holy Ghost. As the work of the Church at all times is under His government, so He, in those early days, directed the steps of His missionaries in wonderful ways, chap. 16, 6—10. Paul planned to make a missionary trip through Macedonia and Achaia, where the congregations at Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea, and Corinth, and possibly one at Athens and in a number of other cities, could well make use of his counsel, encouragement, and admonition, after which he intended to travel to Jerusalem. His own personal wish and desire was, after he had made these journeys, to see Rome, the capital of the entire empire. Since he could not leave at once, he sent two of his assistants in advance, two of the younger men that ministered to him while they were perfecting their knowledge of theology, namely, Timothy and Erastus. These two were to proceed to Macedonia first, but with instructions to visit Achaia also and there to inform the congregation at Corinth concerning Paul's ways and teaching, 1 Cor. 4, 17; 16, 10. Paul himself stayed in Ephesus for some time longer, though the congregations in the house of Aquila and Priscilla and elsewhere in the province were by this time well established, 1 Cor. 16, 19. This addition to this stay (v. 10) made the total length of time spent in Ephesus nearer three years than two, chap. 20, 31.

The speech of Demetrius: V. 23. **And the same time there arose no small stir about that way.** V. 24. **For a certain man named Demetrius, a silversmith, which made silver shrines for Diana, brought no small gain unto the craftsmen;** v. 25. **whom he called together with the workmen of like occupation and said, Sirs, ye know that by this craft we have our wealth.** V. 26. **Moreover, ye see and hear that not alone at Ephesus, but almost throughout all Asia this Paul hath persuaded and turned away much people, saying that they be no gods which are made with hands,** v. 27. **so that not only this our craft is in danger to be set at naught, but also that the temple of the great goddess Diana should be despised, and her magnificence should be destroyed, whom all Asia and the world worshipeth.** At that same time, when the apostle had sent Timothy and Erastus ahead to Macedonia, a tumult of no small proportions was started in Ephesus on account of the way which Paul taught, the Gospel proclamation with all it included. For in the city lived a certain man, a silversmith, Demetrius by name, the master of the guild for that year, as some think. An ancient inscription even makes it probable that he was the president of the city board of magistrates at that time. The silversmiths of Ephesus did a lucrative business in those days by selling small models of the shrine of the goddess Diana, of the great temple of Ephesus, as souvenirs. This temple was one of the seven wonders of the ancient world, 425 by 220 feet in size, and gloriously beautiful with its white marble columns supporting the roof. Some of the porphyry columns now in Santa Sophia at Constantinople are said to have been taken from it. "The temple was venerated over all of western Asia Minor. To it came many pilgrims every year, to whom Ephesian silversmiths sold little replicas of the temple. It was because Christianity became so popular through the preaching of Paul that the profitable sale of these shrines was interfered with, that the riot in Ephesus occurred." 78) "These 'shrines' were not mere statuettes of the goddess, but were probably miniature representations of the temple shrine which were sometimes dedicated to the goddess as votive offerings, sometimes,

78) Barton, *Archeology and the Bible*, 223.

doubtless, kept in the homes, or placed in graves by the side of the dead." 79) Naturally, this business brought a great deal of money to the silversmiths, and, just as naturally, anything that tended to interfere with this business and thus touch the craftsmen in their most sensitive spot, the question of income, was denounced with great resentment. The speech of Demetrius to his fellow-craftsmen, a formal meeting of whom he had called, contains the charges in a very frank way, namely, that Paul was hurting their business, and that he was interfering with the worship of Diana. They all knew that they were making a very comfortable living out of this business. And now they saw it before their eyes and heard it daily that the activities of this man Paul were not confined to the city of Ephesus itself, but that he had, in almost the entire province of Asia, persuaded and turned away a great multitude from the ancient form of worship, because he said that those figures which are made by the hands of men are no gods. This testimony out of the mouth of one of the enemies, although it must be discounted to some extent as an exaggeration with the purpose of making an impression, still paints an impressive picture of the success of Paul's labors. If the amount of business had been reduced to such an extent that all the members of the craft felt the effects, the number of converts to Christianity, together with the moral influence of their outspoken or implied disapproval, must have been very large. But Demetrius skilfully puts his emphasis on the second charge. He implies that the loss of their income might be borne yet, that the danger which was threatening this branch of their trade in bringing it into contempt was not the most serious aspect of the situation, but this he urges as his real complaint, that the sanctuary of the great goddess Artemis (Diana) would fall into bad repute, would no longer be regarded, and that she would even be deposed from her magnificence, and her majesty, glory, and praise be lowered, although, as the speaker points out, all of Asia and the whole world worshiped her. Both the Greeks and the Romans revered this goddess very highly, and though only the people of Asia Minor made regular pilgrimages to this temple, it was known in every part of the civilized world, and was duly given the homage which the average heathen gave to the gods about whom he received instruction. The speech of Demetrius was that of a shrewd demagog, who knew well how to play upon the passions of the people by touching upon their most sensitive points: love of money and religious superstition.

The effect of the speech: V. 28. **And when they heard these sayings, they were full of wrath and cried out, saying, Great is Diana of the Ephesians!** V. 29. **And the whole city was filled with confusion; and having caught Gaius and Aristarchus, men of Macedonia, Paul's companions in travel, they rushed with one accord into the theater.** V. 30. **And when Paul would have entered in unto the people, the disciples suffered him not.** V. 31. **And certain of the chiefs of Asia, which were his friends, sent unto him, desiring him that he would not adventure himself into the theater.** V. 32. **Some therefore cried one thing, and some another; for the assembly was confused, and the more part knew not wherefore they were come together.** V. 33. **And they drew Alexander out of the multitude, the Jews putting him forward. And Alexander beckoned with the hand, and would have made his defense unto the people.** V. 34. **But when they knew that he was a Jew, all with one voice, about the space of two hours, cried out, Great is Diana of the Ephesians!** If Demetrius intended to kindle a fire, he certainly was successful beyond his design. No sooner had he closed his speech than some member of the guild or some other person in the audience coined a catchy phrase which struck the popular fancy: Great is Artemis of the Ephesians! And, full of anger as they were, the others took up the cry and carried it out to the street. In less time than it takes to tell about it, the disturbance had spread to all quarters; it filled the city, and surged back and forth like various liquids that have been poured together and cannot become settled. The streets being far too narrow for a proper show of mob violence, agitators and rabble alike were struck by the idea at the same time and rushed into the large theater, probably the largest in the world, its diameter being 495 feet and its capacity 24,500 people. But on their way, in their mad rush, they managed to seize and to carry along with them two fellow-lodgers of Paul, the Macedonians Gaius and Aristarchus. The latter is mentioned also in other passages as a native of Macedonia, of the city of Thessalonica, chap. 20, 4; 27, 2. It is probable that these two men, here mentioned as attendants of Paul, were delegates of the Thessalonian congregation who were with Paul carrying the contribution to the congregation at Jerusalem. These faithful men being in danger of their lives, Paul firmly intended to go out and face the angry mob, in order to shield them with his own life; but this the members of the congregation would not permit. To the infuriated mob his appearance at that time would have been like a red rag, and, according to all possibility, could have accomplished nothing. And the disciples were seconded in their endeavors by some of the leading men of the city, the Asiarchs, the chief priests of the Roman Empire in the provinces, whose duties included also the providing of games for the people. Some of these influential men were decidedly friendly to Paul, as this act of kindness

79) Cobern, *The New Archeological Discoveries*, 479.

shows, since they took the trouble of sending to him and earnestly begging him not to venture forth into the theater. In the mean time, the members of the mob were working themselves into a fine frenzy, for they continued to shout, some one thing and some another. There was no unity of thought and of leadership: it was an unlawful, tumultuous assembly, poured together like liquids that will not mix properly. And, as usual, when a rabble, a mob, springs from the ground upon such occasions, the majority of the people had no idea why they had really come together. At this point the Jews of the city, fearing that the fury of the mob might turn against them also, since Paul was a Jew, and since they themselves were opposed to idolatry, made the attempt to have one of their own number, a man by the name of Alexander, explain the situation to the surging multitude. The man tried to follow the instructions which he had received as the Jews pushed him to the front. But no sooner did he raise his hand, indicating to the people that he wanted to speak, and, in this case, to hold a speech of defense, than the intelligence went the rounds that he was a Jew. Whether they could all see plainly enough to distinguish his dress and features, or whether those nearest to the arena or stage passed the word along, — the entire multitude, the infuriated mob, with one voice from them all, like the bellowing of some enraged monster, took up the phrase which had caught their fancy as one of the silversmiths had shouted it: Great is Artemis of the Ephesians! It was a wild demonstration of a lawless mob, but a comparatively harmless enjoyment, at that: it satisfied their idea of worship without hurting any one. The city authorities therefore did not interfere at this point, since any opposition would have inflamed the mob to acts of violence. They were evidently well versed in the psychology of the mob and bided their time.

The end of the riot: V. 35. **And when the townclerk had appeased the people, he said, Ye men of Ephesus, what man is there that knoweth not how that the city of the Ephesians is a worshiper of the great goddess Diana, and of the image which fell down from Jupiter?** V. 36. **Seeing, then, that these things cannot be spoken against, ye ought to be quiet, and to do nothing rashly.** V. 37. **For ye have brought hither these men, which are neither robbers of churches, nor yet blasphemers of your goddess.** V. 38. **Wherefore, if Demetrius, and the craftsmen which are with him, have a matter against any man, the law is open, and there are deputies; let them implead one another.** V. 39. **But if ye enquire anything concerning other matters, it shall be determined in a lawful assembly.** V. 40. **For we are in danger to be called in question for this day's uproar, there being no cause whereby we may give an account of this concourse.** V. 41. **And when he had thus spoken, he dismissed the assembly.** With two hours' continuous yelling, the fury of the mob had spent itself, its members were exhausted. And now the secretary of the city had no difficulty in quieting the people. "He was the most influential person in Ephesus, for not only were the decrees to be proposed drafted by him and the *Strategoi* [the magistrates], and money left to the city was committed to his charge, but as the power of the *Ecclesia*, the public assembly, declined under imperial rule, the importance of the secretary's office was enhanced, because he was in closer touch with the court of the proconsul than the other city magistrates, and acted as a medium of communication between the imperial and municipal government." 80) Addressing the assembly as citizens of Ephesus, he asks whether there is really any man that does not know the city of Ephesus to be the temple-keeper of the great Artemis and of the figure that fell down from heaven. The image of Artemis the Fruitful, a figure representing the goddess as life-giver and nourisher, was said to have fallen down from the sky, having been thrown down from the throne of Zeus, or Jupiter, their highest God. The speaker represented these things as facts, as self-evident, as unchallenged by any one, with the implication, of course, that there was no need of all this excitement, since all that they had said about their goddess was universally acknowledged. Now, he argued, since these things were without contradiction, since no one had publicly attacked these statements, the obvious duty of every one there present was to keep the peace and not to do anything rash. As for Gaius and Aristarchus, the two men whom they had accused indirectly, even if they did not bring a direct charge against them, they were neither robbers of the temple, nor had they blasphemed their goddess. The speaker here ignores the real charge against the disciples, that of denying that images made with hands are gods. He did not state the whole truth, being perhaps not even acquainted with it, but simply judged from the case as it appeared before him. Paul and his companions had never, as later fanatical missionaries and iconoclasts did, thrown down and destroyed heathen images, nor had they attempted to gain their point by abuse and bluster, but they had simply taught the truth and tried to convince the heathen of the vanity of their idols. If therefore Demetrius and his fellow-craftsmen felt that they had a case against any one, the court-meetings were going on at that very moment, sessions of the court were being held and the judges were present, the proconsul was on duty; let them therefore bring their charge. These simple rules, which must obtain in a well-ordered state, should be followed, then there

80) *Expositor's Greek Testament*, II, 416.

would be justice for all. But if the assembly desired to have any resolution passed concerning the future conduct of citizens or of residents of the city, such things were to be decided in a legal meeting, called in a legal manner and empowered to pass such resolutions, the present meeting not coming under this heading. He finally reminded the people of the possible consequences of their foolish acts. They all were in danger of being called to account for the riot of that day, in itself a serious matter, since it would not be possible for them to show any reason for this tumult. And the crowning bit of tactful diplomacy was the action of the secretary in dismissing the assembly. The words imply the usual formal dismissal, a motion to adjourn having been called for by the moderator and duly passed by the assembly. This trick would tend to give the meeting a lawful aspect and help to shield the people in case of an investigation. It was thus a skilful device of the secretary both to make the people still more heartily ashamed of themselves, and to make them feel indebted to him for keeping them out of greater difficulties. Note: The riot at Ephesus has its parallels in contemporary church history. The true preachers of the Gospel are no robbers of churches, no iconoclasts, no senseless blasphemers; but their duty is to show the heathen of our days the vanity of the modern idols, of the lust of the flesh, of the lust of the eyes, of the pride of life. And this position is bitterly resented by those that feel their guilt. Whenever they have an opportunity, therefore, they incite thoughtless people against the Church. The days of mob-rule are evidently not past yet. Since, however, an infuriated mob has no reason, the Christians will quietly wait and place their cause into the hands of God until they may confess the Word once more and build their Lord's kingdom. The exalted Christ watches over His own in the midst of all dangers.

Summary. *Paul labors at Ephesus for almost three years with great success, although the opponents try to harm the cause of Christ by inciting a tumult.*

CHAPTER 20.

The Journey to Macedonia and Back to Miletus. Acts 20, 1—16.

The second visit to Macedonia and Greece: V. 1. **And after the uproar was ceased, Paul called unto him the disciples, and embraced them, and departed for to go into Macedonia.** V. 2. **And when he had gone over those parts, and had given them much exhortation, he came into Greece,** v. 3. **and there abode three months. And when the Jews laid wait for him, as he was about to sail into Syria, he purposed to return through Macedonia.** V. 4. **And there accompanied him intc Asia Sopater of Berea; and of the Thessalonians, Aristarchus and Secundus; and Gaius of Derbe, and Timotheus; and of Asia, Tychicus and Trophimus.** V. 5. **These going before tarried for us at Troas.** Paul had intended to make a trip to Macedonia and Achaia, chap. 19, 21. That the riot in the city materially hastened his departure, or that the work of the Lord in Ephesus had come to a standstill or even received a severe setback, is not included in the text, 1 Cor. 16, 8. 9. Not one of the disciples had been harmed in the tumult, and the speech of the secretary of the city must certainly be considered favorable, although in a negative way, rather than anything else. After the uproar had ceased, after the last excitement attending the riot had died down, which may have taken days and even weeks, Paul decided that the time for departure had come. So he called a special meeting of all the disciples of Ephesus, for there must have been other house congregations besides that of Aquila and Priscilla, 1 Cor. 16, 19. At this last service he gave them a farewell address of admonition and encouragement; he then took leave of them with the usual form of salutation and started on his trip to Macedonia. Sailing up the Aegean Sea, he landed at Troas, where he had expected to meet Titus, 2 Cor. 2, 12. 13. But since he did not find him, he lost no time in pushing on to Macedonia. Here he made his missionary journeys in the accustomed way, visiting all the districts where congregations had been established, Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea. In all these cities his words of encouragement and admonition, of which he was not sparing, tended to establish the brethren in the faith and in sound Christianity. He even extended his journey over into the borders of Illyricum, west of Macedonia, Rom. 15, 19. But then he turned southward into Greece, or Achaia, where his principal errand was to the congregation at Corinth, some trouble there requiring his attention. He made a stay of fully three months here, intending after that to make the voyage directly to Syria. It was most likely at this time that he wrote the letter to the Galatians and also that to the Romans. But his plans were crossed by the enmity of the Jews, who plotted against his life, either by waiting for him at Cenchreae or by hiring assassins to murder him aboard the vessel. Paul therefore quickly changed his mind and his plans and traveled overland through Macedonia, in order to embark in one of those harbors. He was not alone on this trip, but had a number of companions, six of

whom, with Luke as the seventh in Philippi, traveled with him all the way, while two went ahead to await his coming in Troas. There was Sopater, or Sopater Pyrrus, of Berea, there were Aristarchus and Secundus of Thessalonica, there were Gaius of Derbe and Timothy of Lystra, there was Luke of Philippi; and finally, there were Tychicus and Trophimus, both of them probably from Ephesus. As one commentator explains, the discovery of the Jewish plot altered Paul's plan, and that at the last moment, when delegates from the various congregations had already assembled. The European delegates had intended to sail from Corinth, with Paul, and the Asian from Ephesus, but the latter, having received word of the change of plans, went as far as Troas to meet the others, and accompanied them the rest of the way. Note: In all these accounts the loving intimacy between Paul and the Christian congregations is evident, a splendid example in these days of indifference and selfishness.

Paul at Troas: V. 6. **And we sailed away from Philippi after the days of unleavened bread, and came unto them to Troas in five days; where we abode seven days.** V. 7. **And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight.** V. 8. **And there were many lights in the upper chamber where they were gathered together.** V. 9. **And there sat in a window a certain young man named Eutychus, being fallen into a deep sleep; and as Paul was long preaching, he sunk down with sleep, and fell down from the third loft, and was taken up dead.** V. 10. **And Paul went down, and fell on him, and embracing him said, Trouble not yourselves, for his life is in him.** V. 11. **When he therefore was come up again, and had broken bread, and eaten, and talked a long while, even till break of day, so he departed.** V. 12. **And they brought the young man alive, and were not a little comforted.** Paul and his companions from the European congregations, including Luke, celebrated the Passover in Philippi. After the festival they sailed from the harbor of Neapolis, but on account of adverse winds did not reach Troas until the fifth day, whereas with favorable winds the trip could be made in two, chap. 16, 11. 12. In Troas all the delegates that were to represent the various congregations in Jerusalem, in bringing them the collection which Paul had ordered, were now together. Here Paul made use of the "open door" of which he speaks elsewhere, 2 Cor. 2, 12, remaining in the city as long as he dared without endangering his plans as to the time of arrival in Jerusalem. On the first of the Sabbaths, on the first day of the week, the disciples came together for services, mainly to break bread, to celebrate Holy Communion. Here we have the first reliable account of the choice of Sunday as the day of worship. Because the faith of the Christians is based upon the resurrection of the Lord, they chose this day, not from necessity or by divine command, but to hear the Word of God and to use the holy Sacraments. It was an evening service, since Paul intended to leave in the morning. Paul himself addressed the assembly in a long didactic sermon, prolonging his address till midnight. It was his desire to give the disciples all possible instruction and admonition while he was still with them. Luke relates that they had many lights in the upper chamber of the house which served as their place of worship, not to guard against the suspicion of sinful practises among the Christians, but simply as a bit of vivid description, and to account, at least in part, for the sleepiness of the young man, whom the many lights, with their fluttering flame, undoubtedly made drowsy, as well as his effort to follow the words of Paul closely. This young man, whose name was Eutychus, had chosen the window-sill as his seat and was there gradually borne down, overcome, by sleep. Nobody seems to have noticed him until it was too late; for his sleep finally became so sound that he lost his balance and fell out of the window of the third floor down to the pavement below. The noise drawing the attention of the assembly to the accident, they hurried down, but only to pick up the young man dead. But Paul, who had also come down, stretched himself upon him and held him closely to the warmth of his body. After that he told the anxious brethren not to make any outcry, since his soul was now in him. It was a miracle of bringing a dead person back to life, much like that of the Shunammite's son, 2 Kings 4, 33—35. Paul then returned to the assembly-room, celebrated the Holy Communion with the brethren and apparently also the feast which was held by the early Christians in connection with the Sacrament. After the close of the regular service, the apostle still spoke to the assembled disciples in a more informal way, explaining to them many points upon which they were in need of information. Until the dawn of the new day the meeting lasted, when Paul set forth on his trip southward. But the disciples of Troas brought the boy alive and well, and were filled with great consolation and strength of faith. They realized that it was the power of God in Paul that had performed this miracle, and that this work therefore testified to the truth of Paul's preaching. This same doctrine is the basis of every Christian's faith to this day.

From Troas to Miletus: V. 13. **And we went before to ship, and sailed unto Assos, there intending to take in Paul; for so had he appointed, minding himself to go afoot.** V. 14. **And when he met with us at**

Assos, we took him in, and came to Mitylene. V. 15. **And we sailed thence, and came the next day over against Chios; and the next day we arrived at Samos, and tarried at Trogyllium; and the next day we came to Miletus.** V. 16. **For Paul had determined to sail by Ephesus, because he would not spend the time in Asia; for he hasted, if it were possible for him, to be at Jerusalem the day of Pentecost.** The companions of Paul went down to the ship and embarked without him, sailing down to the city of Assos on the Adramyttene Gulf. The distance by water is about forty miles, while the trip overland is only about half as far. Paul had so ordered it, intending to make the trip afoot and to have them take him into the ship, to pick him up in the evening or on the next day. Paul was worn out with the labors and the excitement of the past weeks, not to speak of the constant menace due to Jewish hatred. A small journey afoot, therefore, though it was made after a night without sleep, would give him the opportunity to be alone in prayer with his Lord, besides affording the diversion of constantly shifting scenery along the way, a relief for body and mind. Note: There is much room for thought here for such as can read between the lines, both as to the burdens borne by a faithful preacher and to the necessity of solitude and recreation at times. When Paul had joined his companions on the ship at Assos, either the same evening or the next morning, and had been picked up by them, they went on to Mitylene, a harbor on the eastern coast of the island of Lesbos, where they anchored for the night, the channel being somewhat dangerous to navigate in the dark. The following day they made good headway, being able to reach a point near the mainland opposite the island of Chios, where they anchored for the night. Their next station was the island of Samos, south of the Caystrian Gulf, and southwest of Ephesus. To reach the island, they struck directly across the gulf and thus did not land at Ephesus. From Samos they crossed to the mainland, having some delay at Trogyllium, probably to take on or unload a part of the cargo. But from there it was only a short run to Miletus, the port at the mouth of the Maeander, a populous and important city, with a large inland trade, where the vessel was to stay for several days. The trip from Troas to Miletus had thus taken from Monday morning to Saturday evening. And Paul did not take the time to stop off somewhere and take a coastwise boat to Ephesus, for he had decided not to stop there on this trip, the delay such an action might occasion being his main reason. His hurry was due to the fact that he wanted to be in Jerusalem for the Festival of Pentecost. This plan left him barely seven weeks from the time he had started from Philippi, and approximately three of these were now gone.

Paul and the Elders of Ephesus.

Acts 20, 17—38.

Paul addresses the elders of Ephesus: V. 17. **And from Miletus he sent to Ephesus, and called the elders of the Church.** V. 18. **And when they were come to him, he said unto them, Ye know, from the first day that I came into Asia, after what manner I have been with you at all seasons,** v. 19. **serving the Lord with all humility of mind, and with many tears, and temptations, which befell me by the lying in wait of the Jews;** v. 20. **and how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have showed you, and have taught you publicly and from house to house,** v. 21. **testifying both to the Jews and also to the Greeks repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.** Miletus was a matter of only about thirty miles from Ephesus, and connected with the capital by a good Roman road. As soon as Paul, therefore, found out that the vessel would be delayed for a number of days, he sent a message to Ephesus, earnestly asking the elders of the church to come down. The congregation at Ephesus, where Paul had labored so long, was especially dear to him, and he felt that he could not afford to let this chance go by. And when the elders had come to see him, he addressed them in words of a tender farewell. He gave them, first of all, a brief review of his labors in their city. From the day that he had first set foot into their province, his concern, during his entire stay, had been for their spiritual and temporal welfare. He had done his work as a faithful servant of the Lord and in His interest only, with such a servant's full and complete humility. His attitude had not been one of apathy, but he had been filled with genuine sorrow for his brethren and for the world, which even manifested itself in tears. His work had been done in the midst of temptations which had surrounded him, which had stepped forward from all sides on account of and in the plots of the Jews. Their enmity had not been confined to an occasional outburst of malice, but had attended him at all time, always with the intention of making him weary in his work for the Lord. But in spite of all these and other difficulties he had not made use of reserve in teaching, as a coward might have done, but openly and candidly he had proclaimed to them what was of value and use to them. For a minister to shrink back from plain statements of truth out of fear for his own welfare is usually a sign of unworthiness, and almost invariably harms the congregation. But Paul had taught the things profitable to the salvation of the Ephesians, publicly, before the assembled congregation, and privately, in visits from house to house. His constant endeavor had been to be a fearless and worthy witness both before the Jews and the Greeks of repentance toward

God and faith in their common Lord Jesus Christ. That is briefly the substance of all Christian preaching, that all men, all sinners, should acknowledge their sins and turn from them to the God of their salvation, accepting the full atonement and redemption of Christ by faith in this their Savior. "Repentance is nothing else than truly acknowledging sin, to be heartily sorry for it, and to desist from it; which knowledge comes from the Law, but is not sufficient for a saving conversion to God, unless faith in Christ is added, whose merit offers the comforting preaching of the holy Gospel to all repentant sinners that are terrified by the preaching of the Law." 81)

Paul warned of coming affliction: V. 22. **And now, behold, I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there;** v. 23. **save that the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide me.** V. 24. **But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the Gospel of the grace of God.** V. 25. **And now, behold, I know that ye all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, shall see my face no more.** V. 26. **Wherefore I take you to record this day that I am pure from the blood of all men.** V. 27. **For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God.** There is a strain of ineffable sadness in the entire address of Paul, and the reason for the sorrowful note is here given. Although Paul himself had not received an express revelation, others had prophesied concerning the outcome of the present journey. He felt urged, compelled in the Spirit, who directed his steps on more than one occasion; it would have been an act of direct disobedience for him not to travel up to Jerusalem. He had no definite information as to the things that would happen to him in that city, that would come upon him to harm him, only that the Holy Spirit, in every city through which he had recently passed, had plainly testified that fetters, chains, and therefore also affliction, awaited him. The nearer he came to Jerusalem, the more explicit became the prophecies, chap. 21, 11. From step to step on his journey, Paul was warned and guided, and incidentally his spirit was filled with consolation and courage from above. He did not esteem his life worthy of mention, as a life that was precious to himself. As he had always subordinated his life, his abilities, his talents, his ambitions under the will of the Lord, so here also he had but one thought, namely, to finish his course, the service which he had received from the Lord Jesus, to be untiring in his testimony, to witness to the Gospel of the grace of God. This service, this ministry, had been entrusted to Paul by Jesus Himself, chap. 9, 6. 15; Gal. 1, 1; Titus 1, 3. Grace presupposes guilt, and therefore Paul had not weakened the proclamation of the Law, but his greatest joy had ever been to attest the Gospel of the grace of God in Christ Jesus, to lead poor sinners to the mercy of their Savior. The same spirit of joyful and willing service must be the driving power in every true servant of the Lord, whether engaged in the work of the formal ministry or not. All this Paul had emphasized once more, because it was his personal conviction, based upon the prophecies which he had heard recently, that they all who were now assembled before him, through whose midst he had journeyed with the proclamation of the kingdom of God, would see his face no more. All indications pointed in that direction and caused him to be very anxious and apprehensive. And this being the case, Paul called upon those present as witnesses before God on that day and in that solemn hour, that he was pure from their blood, that not a single one of them could demand his soul at the hand of the apostle from want of pastoral care; for he had not held back, he had not shrunk from proclaiming to them the entire counsel of God, the counsel of redemption and grace. "No epistle excels that to the Ephesians in the richness of its thoughts, and in its conception of a divine purpose running through the ages; no epistle dwells more fully upon the conception of the Church as the body of Christ, or exhorts more touchingly to diligence in keeping the unity of the spirit, or insists more practically upon the sanctifying power of the one Spirit and the sense of a divine membership in every sphere of human life. The rich and full teaching of the epistle is addressed to men who are able to understand the apostle's knowledge of the mystery of Christ; in other words, to those to whom he had announced more fully than to others the counsel of God." 82)

The special charge to the elders: V. 28. **Take heed therefore unto yourselves and to all the flock over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the Church of God, which He hath purchased with His own blood.** V. 29. **For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock.** V. 30. **Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them.** V. 31. **Therefore watch and remember that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears.** With the example of the apostle before them, and with his challenge ringing in their ears, the elders of Ephesus should take heed, should attend closely, should watch over them-

81) *Form. Conc.* Mueller, 634.

82) *Expositor's Greek Testament*, II, 434.

selves. He purposely places this care first, as that which must precede the care of the flock. For only by constant watchfulness over themselves would they also be able to take proper care of the flock, of the congregation, which was in need of proper feeding and the most faithful attendance. For they are still members of the flock, though the Holy Ghost has placed them in the midst of the flock as overseers, with the one aim and purpose, namely, to feed and nourish the congregation, the Church of the Lord at this place, with spiritual food in proper amounts. Note that the elders are here addressed as bishops, or overseers, showing that in the times of the apostles there was no difference between the two offices, the names being used indiscriminately. No hierarchy has been established by God's command. It is most significant that Paul describes the congregation of the Lord as being purchased, acquired by purchase, through His own blood. "This is surely a clear text, from which follows without all contradiction that Christ, our Lord, through whose blood the Church was purchased, is God, to whom the Church belongs. For he says clearly: It is God, who through His blood has won the Church and whose own the Church is. Since now, as we have heard, the persons are distinct, and it still is written here that God Himself through His blood has purchased the Church, therefore the conclusion comes with great force that God has His own blood which He has shed for His Church, that is, that Christ, our Savior, is true God, born of the Father from eternity, thereafter also by the Virgin Mary in time become a man and born." 83) The responsibility being so great, therefore, with such precious souls to give an account for, Paul's warning against two dangers which his prophetic vision could foresee, came with double emphasis. He knew that after his departure from them, in a future which was not greatly distant, there would enter into the flock from without grievous, ravening, ferocious wolves, false teachers that would have no mercy on the flock, but would use every means to disrupt the congregation, to murder the souls by trying to persuade them to accept false doctrine. And in addition there would be factionists from within, out of their own membership, men that would arise without call and authority and establish themselves as teachers, with a doctrine full of perverse and antichristian matter, with the intention of drawing away those that were already Christians, the latter thereby becoming guilty of apostasy from the truth and from the true Church of Christ. These two dangers looming up before them, the elders of Ephesus should watch, be on their guard, exert constant vigilance, always remembering that Paul, for a space of three years, in round numbers, had not ceased night and day to admonish every single one of them with tears. His faithfulness should therefore serve as a continual incentive to them in the entire work of their responsible office. Note: To this day it is the Holy Ghost that gives to the congregations the teachers of the Gospel. For though He does not call immediately, yet He uses the congregations as His instruments and directs the affairs of His Church; therefore the congregations should also accept the pastors chosen by them in this spirit, and pledge them to teach and to watch, just as Paul here did the elders of Ephesus.

Paul's words of farewell: V. 32. **And now, brethren, I commend you to God and to the Word of His grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified.** V. 33. **I have coveted no man's silver, or gold, or apparel.** V. 34. **Yea, ye yourselves know that these hands have ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me.** V. 35. **I have showed you all things, how that so laboring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus how He said, It is more blessed to give than to receive.** Paul had held up before the elders of Ephesus his own example, and had warned them most urgently against the dangers that would threaten the congregation. He now points them to the only source of courage and strength sufficient for them, by commending them to God and His Word, the Word of Grace, the grace of God being the primary content, the summary of the Gospel. With the counsel and admonition of God, as presented in this Word, before them at all times, they could not lack in strength in the midst of all adversity. For this Word is able at all times to build up, to edify, the Christians, and not only to promise them, but actually to give them the inheritance among all the consecrated. The promises of mercy in the Word of God are so sure, so plain, that there can be no doubt of its glories as the possession of the believers. In concluding, Paul once more, in a striking appeal, with graphic vividness, holds his example before the Ephesian elders. Neither the silver nor the gold nor the clothes of any one had he coveted; he had not been in the ministry among them for money. What is more, on account of a special glory which he desired to have, he had worked, as they knew, with his own hands, whose toil-worn palms he showed them, in order to provide the necessities of life for himself and for those that ministered with him. Very likely, Paul also in Ephesus had worked at his trade, either with Aquila and Priscilla or with Philemon. But this favorite boast of his was far secondary in importance to the fact that he had very strenuously labored in his ministry, and had thereby shown the Christians of Ephesus what was required in this work; he had in all things given them an example, combining his

83) Luther, 12, 650; *Form. Conc.*, Mueller, 546.

manual labors with the service of the needy. Thus it is an obligation to come to the aid of the sick and of all those that are in trouble, remembering always the words of the Lord Jesus, which He Himself had spoken, and which had been preserved by the disciples, although not included in the Gospels: "It is more blessed to give than to receive." This unselfish devotion to the service of the needy neighbor had been practised by Jesus; it had been followed by Paul; it should be emulated by all Christians, for only thus will their faith find its proper expression and application.

The elders bid their teacher Godspeed: V. 36. **And when he had thus spoken, he kneeled down and prayed with them all.** V. 37. **And they all wept sore, and fell on Paul's neck, and kissed him,** v. 38. **sorrowing most of all for the words which he spake that they should see his face no more. And they accompanied him unto the ship.** The touching farewell address of Paul had deeply moved all the elders of Ephesus. And this impression was heightened by the fact that, when he had finished speaking to them, he knelt down, threw himself down on his knees with them, and sent up a fervent supplication to the throne of grace, for himself, for the congregation at Ephesus, for the Church at large, imploring the protection of the Lord upon His own work. The leave-taking, after the manner of the warm-blooded Southern people, was very affectionate. Much bitter weeping of all took place, and, unable to control their feelings, they fell upon Paul's neck and kissed him again and again; for they had been most deeply affected by the word which he told them that they would not see his face again, would never again behold him expounding to them the wonderful mysteries of God. And then, as a final show of affection and reverence, they brought the apostle on his way to the ship, the harbor being some distance from the place where they met with him. Note: Such tender affection of a congregation for the teacher that has brought them the Word of Life, with similar expressions of this love, is witnessed even in our days; and it is surely well pleasing to the Lord to see the relation take this form. Nevertheless, it must never be forgotten that the affection should center in the Gospel proclamation rather than in the person of the pastor or teacher. The Gospel and the work of saving souls must stand in the foreground at all times, and for the sake of these the servants of the Lord should be esteemed very highly, 1 Thess. 5, 13.

Summary. *Paul makes the intended journey to Macedonia and Greece, returning to Asia by way of Philippi and Troas, and meeting the elders of Ephesus at Miletus, where he addresses them in a touching farewell.*

CHAPTER 21.

The Trip to Jerusalem. Acts 21, 1—16.

From Miletus to Tyre: V. 1. **And it came to pass that, after we were gotten from them and had launched, we came with a straight course unto Coos and the day following unto Rhodes and from thence unto Patara;** v. 2. **and finding a ship sailing over into Phenicia, we went aboard and set forth.** V. 3. **Now, when we had discovered Cyprus, we left it on the left hand, and sailed into Syria and landed at Tyre; for there the ship was to unlade her burden.** V. 4. **And finding disciples, we tarried there seven days; who said to Paul through the Spirit that he should not go up to Jerusalem.** The leave-taking from the elders was attended with such difficulties that Paul and his companions literally had to tear themselves from their embraces, so bitterly did they feel the parting from the beloved apostle. But they finally embarked and set sail almost due south to the island of Coos or Cos, just before the opening of the Ceramic Gulf, off the coast of Caria, a district of Proconsular Asia. With a favorable, brisk wind they made this distance in one day. On the next day, with almost equally favorable winds, they managed to reach the harbor of Rhodes, on the island of Rhodes, where the great Colossus, the lighttower of the port, now lay prostrate. From here their course was almost due east, to the city of Patara, in Lycia. Here they left the vessel which had carried them from Troas, either because this was its destination, or because the ship was engaged in coastwise traffic and would prove too slow for their purpose. They engaged passage on a vessel bound directly for Phenicia, went on board, and set sail. In due time they sighted the island of Cyprus, memorable to Paul on account of the work he had done there years before; but they left it on the left hand, that is, they sailed past the island on the south on a straight course for Syria, to which province Phenicia belonged. The vessel anchored at Tyre for a week to unload her cargo, and Paul and his companions landed. The unloading was attended with considerable trouble and occupied much time, since it included also the carrying into town of the bales, bundles, and boxes. Naturally the apostle's party lost no time in looking up the disciples, since they knew that there was a congregation in the city (a fine example for Christian travelers in our day to follow). Their quest being successful, they stayed in Tyre seven days. These disciples, some of their number, here received a special revelation through the Spirit concerning at least the general fate which awaited Paul, and they told him repeatedly not

to go up to Jerusalem. This warning seems not to have been included in the revelation, but was added on account of their solicitude for the apostle's welfare, who, however, in spite of all entreaties, was unmoved in his determination.

From Tyre to Caesarea: V. 5. **And when we had accomplished those days, we departed and went our way; and they all brought us on our way, with wives and children, till we were out of the city. And we kneeled down on the shore and prayed. V. 6. And when we had taken our leave one of another, we took ship; and they returned home again. V. 7. And when we had finished our course from Tyre, we came to Ptolemais, and saluted the brethren, and abode with them one day. V. 8. And the next day we that were of Paul's company departed and came unto Caesarea; and we entered into the house of Philip the evangelist, which was one of the seven, and abode with him. V. 9. And the same man had four daughters, virgins, which did prophesy.** When Paul and his companions had accomplished the seven days, when they had finished the time, when the stated period was up during which they had remained for the cargo to be unloaded, they went out of the city to continue their trip. And here we have a fine bit of evidence from an eye-witness to indicate the affectionate intimacy which in those days characterized the relation of the Christians in general. For the disciples of the city, the entire congregation, not only the men, but also their wives and children, escorted them on their way outside of the city. The band of mutual love, tied by their mutual faith, united them in a closer union than earthly friendship could have done. Having arrived before the city, on the sandy beach near the water's edge, they all kneeled down and committed themselves and their cause to God in prayer. The very simplicity of the narrative at this place makes it so impressive. Then there were leave-takings from the friends of a week, more dear mutually than others of months and years, after which Paul and his company went on board, and the others returned home. The travelers now, sailing from Tyre, completed their voyage; they were on the last section of their journey, down the coast of Syria and Palestine. The voyage from Macedonia had been completed with the landing at Tyre, the short distance still remaining could be made without difficulty. Their ship ran in and anchored at Ptolemais, a harbor eight miles north of Mount Carmel, and they thus had a chance to salute the brethren in that city and to spend the day with them. But on the next day they started out and came to Caesarea, where the trip by water ended. Here they entered into the house of Philip the Evangelist, originally one of the seven deacons elected by the congregation at Jerusalem, chap. 6, but driven from the city by the persecution of Saul of Tarsus. They were entertained by Philip with all cordiality for some time. Luke, who here, together with some of his companions, made the acquaintance of Philip, records that there were four daughters in the house, virgins, who had the gift of prophecy. There is nothing in the text, however, that would oblige us to conclude that they belonged to a special order, or that they had taken the vow of chastity. They simply shared the home life of their father, making use of their extraordinary gifts only as the Spirit directed, and did no public teaching. Their case came under the heading of the fulfilment of Joel 2, 29, from which no special conclusions in regard to our days may be drawn.

The prophecy of Agabus: V. 10. **And as we tarried there many days, there came down from Judea a certain prophet, named Agabus. V. 11. And when he was come unto us, he took Paul's girdle, and bound his own hands and feet, and said, Thus saith the Holy Ghost, So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owneth this girdle, and shall deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles. V. 12. And when we heard these things, both we and they of that place besought him not to go up to Jerusalem. V. 13. Then Paul answered, What mean ye to weep and to break mine heart? For I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus. V. 14. And when he would not be persuaded, we ceased, saying, The will of the Lord be done. V. 15. And after those days we took up our carriages and went up to Jerusalem. V. 16. There went with us also certain of the disciples of Caesarea, and brought with them one Mnason of Cyprus, an old disciple, with whom we should lodge.** "Many days," a few days more, they, Paul and his companions, remained in Caesarea. Paul had been singularly fortunate in having a speedy voyage, a fact which now gave him some extra time, at least a few days, a matter of ten or twelve days. But during this time, spent with the hospitable Philip and his family, Paul received the last and, incidentally, the most exact and explicit prophetic warning on this whole journey. For a disciple by the name of Agabus, who had the gift of prophecy, came down to Caesarea from some city in Judea, probably from Jerusalem, chap. 11, 28. When this man entered the house of Philip, he proceeded to act in a manner altogether in conformity with that of the prophets of the Old Testament, in a symbolical act emphasizing the words he spoke. He took off the girdle which held the upper garments of Paul in place, bound his own feet and hands, and then explained that the Jews of Jerusalem would bind the owner of that girdle in the same way as he was now bound, and would deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles. This he did not venture as his own private opinion, but expressly stated that

the Holy Ghost was making the prophecy, a fact which made all contradiction and doubt impossible. The announcement naturally created the greatest consternation, not only in the circle of Paul's companions and in the household of Philip, but in the entire congregation at Caesarea, the inhabitants of the city. And they all, including Luke himself, joined in begging Paul not to go up to Jerusalem. But Paul remained firm, not in false seeking of the martyr's crown, for he had upon other occasions yielded to the entreaties of his friends, but for a reason which he would not divulge. He, in turn, however, earnestly begged them all to desist. He asked them what they meant by weeping, why they insisted upon thus breaking his heart. Their tender care for his welfare deeply moved him, but it could not make him waver in his determination. He declared that he was ready not only to be bound, but also to die in Jerusalem for the sake of the Lord Jesus. The name of his Savior he could and would not deny. He was convinced that his call was taking him to Jerusalem, and that it was not a matter of free choice. The Jewish Christians that were looking upon his missionary labors with suspicion had to be persuaded of their foolishness, and the unity of the Church between Jews and Gentiles had to be definitely established. This was also the purpose of the collection which his companions were bringing to the brethren at Jerusalem. Though Paul did not explain all this at length, the brethren at Caesarea discontinued their efforts to keep him away from the Jewish capital, placing the matter and its outcome entirely in the hands of the Lord, whose will should be done. So after the days had elapsed which Paul had allowed, he and his companions collected all their baggage necessary for the journey and made the trip up to the highlands where Jerusalem was situated, a distance of a little over sixty miles. Their company was enlarged by the addition of some of the disciples of Caesarea, who aided them on their arrival at Jerusalem by conducting them to the house of one Mnason of Cyprus, in whose house they were to lodge for the time of their stay. This man was an old disciple, that is, an original disciple, one of those that had been converted on the great day of Pentecost.[84] Mark that the Christian virtue of hospitality was freely exercised in the early days of the Church, in every city where Paul and his party had time to stop.

The Jewish Uprising against Paul.

Acts 21, 17—39.

The reception at Jerusalem: V. 17. **And when we were come to Jerusalem, the brethren received us gladly.** V. 18. **And the day following Paul went with us unto James; and all the elders were present.** V. 19. **And when he had saluted them, he declared particularly what things God had wrought among the Gentiles by his ministry.** When Paul and his companions reached Jerusalem, the brethren of the congregation received them with joy, much to the encouragement of them all. The next day there was a more formal meeting, when Paul took his companions and presented them to James, the brother of the Lord, the most prominent elder of the congregation. All the other elders of the congregation were also present for the interview. After saluting them all, Paul began to narrate, literally, to give an account, one by one, in careful detail, what the Lord had done among the Gentiles through his ministry. This referred especially to the success of the second and of the third journey, for the brethren in Jerusalem had heard the story of the first journey, chap. 15, 4. Very likely Paul's recital also brought out the fact that he had lived up to the resolutions passed by the conference in Jerusalem some eight or nine years before. Reports from the mission-fields should always prove most interesting to all the Christian brethren, and should stimulate interest in the work.

A case of Jewish prejudice: V. 20. **And when they heard it, they glorified the Lord and said unto him, Thou seest, brother, how many thousands of Jews there are which believe; and they are all zealous of the Law;** v. 21. **and they are informed of thee that thou teachest all the Jews which are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, saying that they ought not to circumcise their children, neither to walk after the customs.** V. 22. **What is it therefore? The multitude must needs come together; for they will hear that thou art come.** V. 23. **Do therefore this that we say to thee: We have four men which have a vow on them;** v. 24. **them take, and purify thyself with them, and be at charges with them that they may shave their heads; and all may know that those things whereof they were informed concerning thee are nothing, but that thou thyself also walkest orderly and keepest the Law.** V. 25. **As touching the Gentiles which believe, we have written and concluded that they observe no such thing, save only that they keep themselves from things offered to idols, and from blood, and from strangled, and from fornication.** The rank and file of the congregation in Jerusalem was still strongly impregnated with Jewish prejudices, and even the elders, including James, had not reached that clearness of distinction between Christian liberty and Jewish customs which was necessary for a full appreciation of the New Testament blessings. The conference of elders responded to Paul's report with praises to God, expressing their full accord with his manner of working. But incidentally they had a little

84) Cp. Cobern, *The New Archeological Discoveries*, 129; Moulton and Milligan, *Vocabulary*, sub voce.

matter which they believed of sufficient importance to bring to his attention. As they put it, Paul himself must have seen, especially in Jerusalem, that there were thousands of Jews that were believers, that had truly accepted Jesus as the promised Messiah. At the same time, however, they had remained and were ardent upholders of the Law, believing that the keeping of all the precepts and traditions was necessary and even essential. These Jews had heard the report, had received the information concerning Paul, that he taught apostasy from Moses, not in general, but to all the Jews that lived in the Diaspora, among the Gentiles abroad. This general charge was specified in two instances, namely, that Paul had taught them not to practise the rite of circumcision, and that he similarly prevailed upon them not to walk after the customs, the observances which had become obligatory by tradition and usage. As a matter of fact, these charges were not true. Paul had not taught the Jews not to circumcise their children, but had himself circumcised Timothy, a half-Jew, on account of the latter's probable work among Jews. Paul had not taught them to forsake the customs of their fathers; for he himself, about a year before, had written to the Corinthians that he had been a Jew to the Jews, 1 Cor. 9, 20. 21. He never lost sight of the distinction between that which we are at liberty to do for the sake of others, and that which we are under obligation to do in order to obey God. And this distinction had been brought out in his efforts to convince the Jews that the ancient rites were no longer binding on their consciences. The elders of Jerusalem may have been more or less aware of all this, but they were afraid that the Jewish Christians, who had not yet reached the state of knowledge for the proper understanding of the difference between the Old and the New Testament, would continue in their offense. In casting around for something that might be done under the circumstances, they felt that a meeting of the entire congregation would become absolutely necessary, for the news of Paul's arrival had spread throughout the city by this time. To avoid any unpleasantness, therefore, they made a suggestion to Paul as to what he might do to remove all false impressions and to meet the weak brethren at least halfway. They had in the congregation four men that were under a Nazirite vow, Num. 6, 2—12, which lay upon them as an unfulfilled obligation. "This necessitated their purification, which required seven days for its completion, the shaving of their heads at the altar, the sacrifice of a sin-offering and a burnt offering for each of them, and the loss of the time passed under the vow. Paul's part with them was, first, to be at charges for them, meaning that he paid part of or all the expenses of the victims which they had to offer; and secondly, to go into the Temple and notify the priests when their days of purification would be fulfilled, so that a priest might be prepared to sacrifice their offerings. The last they could not do themselves, because the Law shut them out of the Jewish court during their uncleanness; but as Paul was unclean, not from contact with a dead body, but from some of the many other causes mentioned in the Law, he could purify himself in a single day by washing his clothes and bathing his flesh and remaining unclean until evening, Lev. 15, 1—30." 85) This act of Paul would give them all to understand that the matters which had been reported concerning him were without foundation, and that he so comported himself as to keep the Law. And so far as the Gentile Christians were concerned, the elders of Jerusalem reassured Paul, by reminding him of their resolution passed in his presence, that they were not obliged to keep the Jewish ceremonial law, but that they should beware of eating the flesh of idol sacrifices, and blood, and the meat of strangled animals, and that they must avoid fornication, sexual vice. From this description it appears that the members of the congregation in Jerusalem were still ardent upholders of the Mosaic ceremonial law, that they continued to circumcise their children, that they regarded the purifications of the church law, though they in some cases involved the offering of sacrifices, as binding even upon the Christians of Jewish extraction, but that they imposed none of these observances upon the Gentile brethren, believing the resolution of the former conference to cover their case completely. As long as mere weakness or lack of spiritual knowledge may be assumed, such behavior may be tolerated, but as soon as matters that are in themselves indifferent are urged as laws of God, the liberty of the Gospel must be insisted upon.

The beginning of the riot: V. 26. **Then Paul took the men, and the next day, purifying himself with them, entered into the Temple to signify the accomplishment of the days of purification until that an offering should be offered for every one of them.** V. 27. **And when the seven days were almost ended, the Jews which were of Asia, when they saw him in the Temple, stirred up all the people, and laid hands on him,** v. 28. **crying out, Men of Israel, help! This is the man that teacheth all men everywhere against the people and the Law and this place; and further brought Greeks also into the Temple, and hath polluted this holy place.** V. 29. **(For they had seen before with him in the city Trophimus, an Ephesian, whom they supposed that Paul had brought into the Temple.)** V. 30. **And all the city was moved, and the people ran together; and they took Paul, and drew him out of the Temple; and forthwith the doors were**

85) McGarvey, *New Commentary on Acts*, II, 208.

shut. Paul here showed that the spirit of Christ lived in him, that he was willing, for the sake of others, to take part in a ceremony of which he knew that it had lost its real significance and value and had become a mere empty form, 1 Cor. 9, 20. He took the four men with him, became their associate, performed the required rites of purification in his own case, and then entered into the Temple proper, that part which was reserved for the exclusive use of the children of Israel, giving notice there, for the convenience of the priests, of the day when the vow would be ended, and the necessary offerings brought for every one of the four. Apparently, Paul also spent most, if not all the time in the Temple during this week. Thus he became all things to all men. Note: In matters in which no fundamental Scriptural principle is involved, a Christian may accommodate himself to others; but he must be careful lest hypocrisy and fear of men furnish his motive for so doing. So far everything had proceeded with gratifying smoothness, and no cloud seemed to be darkening the horizon. All the more surprising, therefore, was the fact that the storm broke from a practically clear sky. For when the seven days of the purification of the Nazirites were about to come to an end, the time for which the apostle was associated with the men, Jews from the province of Asia, probably from Ephesus itself, that had come up for the Feast of Pentecost, saw him in the Temple, and their hatred was at once inflamed to a white fury. The very fact that this supposed despiser of the Temple should dare to enter its inner courts (which were forbidden to the Gentiles under pain of death) was an insult in their estimation. So they immediately raised a disturbance, stirred up the people, like liquids that refuse to mix and surge to and fro, and laid violent hands upon Paul. At the same time, they raised their voices, calling upon the assembled Israelites to help. The very name intended to remind them all of the dignity and glory, of the hopes and obligations, of their nation. Contemptuously referring to Paul as "this man," this outcast, they accused him of making it a habit to teach all men, everywhere, against the people, against the Law, against this place, this city. Mark the significant coincidence that the charge against Paul is made in almost the same words as that which had been brought against Stephen, chap. 6, 13. But the gravest part of the accusation was the allegation that Paul had brought Greeks into the Temple proper, inside the Soreg, or stone wall, which enclosed the sanctuary, and had thus profaned the Holy Place itself. But the latter charge was based upon a false supposition, namely, that Paul had brought Trophimus, the delegate of the Ephesian congregation, who had been seen in his company in the city, into the Temple — an altogether unwarranted deduction. But the Jews were in a mood to rest their suspicions upon even slighter evidence, if they could but succeed in removing Paul. The immediate effect of their startling and vehement charge and denunciation certainly left nothing to be desired. The entire city was moved, the excitement having spread like wildfire; there was a tumultuous concourse of the people; he was surounded by a band of people that grabbed him and dragged him outside of the sanctuary into the Court of the Gentiles. And then the doors of the Temple, of the sanctuary, were locked by the Levites, either because they feared that the Temple would be defiled by the shedding of blood, or because they believed that this defilement had already taken place by the entrance of a Gentile into its Holy Place, and that it must be purified before it could be reopened. Note: The Jews, just like their successors in our days, were so hostile to the Gospel preached by Paul because he condemned their Pharisaic self-righteousness and testified before Jews and Greeks alike that a man is justified by faith, without the deeds of the Law. The false church, boasting its own righteousness, and the honorable, virtuous world have ever been the principal enemies of the Church of Christ and of the Gospel of God's free grace and mercy.

The captain of the Roman band interferes: V. 31. **And as they went about to kill him, tidings came unto the chief captain of the band that all Jerusalem was in an uproar.** V. 32. **Who immediately took soldiers and centurions, and ran down unto them; and when they saw the chief captain and the soldiers, they left beating of Paul.** V. 33. **Then the chief captain came near, and took him, and commanded him to be bound with two chains; and demanded who he was and what he had done.** V. 34. **And some cried one thing, some another, among the multitude; and when he could not know the certainty for the tumult, he commanded him to be carried into the castle.** It was a typical mob, without reason and sense, that was surging back and forth in the Court of the Gentiles, every one trying to lay hold on the prisoner and do violence to him, all of them eager to kill him. But now some one brought the report to the Roman officer in the Tower of Antonia, which overlooked the Temple and its courts, that the entire city of Jerusalem was in confusion, that a riot had taken hold of all the inhabitants. And this officer, the military tribune, or chiliarch, having a thousand men under his command in the garrison, lost no time, but took several hundred men with their centurions, or officers, with him and ran down upon the seething mob, from the castle to the lower platform of the court, where the center of the riot was situated. This quick action probably saved Paul's life; for when the people saw the tribune, they stopped beating their prisoner. As the commanding officer then came nearer, he saw that Paul was the center and, in some way, the occasion of the disturbance, and therefore very naturally concluded that he was

a criminal upon whom the Jews were inflicting speedy punishment. Since this was not the time to make inquiry, he took the prisoner in charge and gave command that he be bound with two chains. Having secured him thus and shielding him at least in part against the furious onslaught of the mob, the chiliarch now tried to determine who he was and what he had done. But, as usual with mobs, there no longer was any clear notion of what it was all about; one yelled one thing, some one else another, and it soon became clear to the officer that it was impossible to learn the facts on account of the tumult. So he commanded that Paul be led to the barracks of the Tower Antonia. Thus God had once more saved the life of His servant, since He wanted him to give testimony of the Gospel before some of the mighty ones of this earth.

On the way to the barracks: V. 35. **And when he came upon the stairs, so it was that he was borne of the soldiers for the violence of the people.** V. 36. **For the multitude of the people followed after, crying, Away with him!** V. 37. **And as Paul was to be led into the castle, he said unto the chief captain, May I speak unto thee? Who said, Canst thou speak Greek?** V. 38. **Art not thou that Egyptian which before these days madest an uproar, and leddest out into the wilderness four thousand men that were murderers?** V. 39. **But Paul said, I am a man which am a Jew of Tarsus, a city in Cilicia, a citizen of no mean city; and I beseech thee, suffer me to speak unto the people.** At the coming of the tribune with his cohorts, the tumult of the people had died down somewhat; but when the soldiers turned to carry out their commander's order, a new frenzy took hold of the people since their prey seemed about to be snatched from them. So it happened that, when Paul came to the steps that led up to the Tower of Antonia, the maddened people surged about the little band of soldiers with increasing violence in an effort to reach Paul. So perilous was the situation that the soldiers were obliged to lift Paul up and carry him, on account of the fierceness of the people. For the multitude of the people persisted in following, incidentally raising the cry: Kill him! Put him to death! the cry which a Jewish mob was prone to take up, Luke 23, 18; John 19, 15. When the soldiers, with the prisoner in their midst, had reached the top of the stairway, with the entire Temple area below them, filled with a swirling, roaring mob, and were about to enter into the barracks, Paul turned to the commanding officer with the question whether he would be permitted to speak to him. The latter, in some surprise, asked, Why, do you understand Greek? From the violence of the mob and from other indications the chiliarch had concluded that Paul must undoubtedly be that Egyptian whom Josephus also mentions, the man who had led a band of four thousand murderers, assassins, out into the wilderness. Evidently the tribune thought that the Egyptian had ventured to return to the city after his disgraceful defeat and had now been set upon as an impostor. But Paul corrected him in a few words, telling him that he was a Jew of Tarsus in Cilicia, concerning which he adds, with pardonable pride, that he was a citizen of no mean city, for Tarsus was a great and flourishing city. The tribune's grave suspicions having been removed, Paul now added the earnest request that he be given permission to address the people. It was his intention, even in this emergency, to remove their prejudice against him and the Gospel of Jesus, and thus, if possible, to gain converts for the Word of Grace.

Summary. *Paul continues his voyage from Miletus to Tyre and from there to Caesarea, whence he travels to Jerusalem, where the Jews from Asia raise a tumult against him, and his life is saved only by the prompt interference of the Roman chiliarch.*

CHAPTER 22.

Paul's Speech to the Jews.

Acts 21, 40—22, 21.

Concerning Paul's early life and persecution of the Church: V. 40. **And when he had given him license, Paul stood on the stairs, and beckoned with the hand unto the people. And when there was made a great silence, he spake unto them in the Hebrew tongue, saying,** v. 1. **Men, brethren, and fathers, hear ye my defense which I make now unto you.** V. 2. **(And when they heard that he spake in the Hebrew tongue to them, they kept the more silence; and he saith,)** v. 3. **I am verily a man which am a Jew, born in Tarsus, a city in Cilicia, yet brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, and taught according to the perfect manner of the Law of the fathers, and was zealous toward God, as ye all are this day.** V. 4. **And I persecuted this way unto the death, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women,** v. 5. **as also the high priest doth bear me witness, and all the estate of the elders, from whom also I received letters unto the brethren, and went to Damascus to bring them which were there bound unto Jerusalem for to be punished.** The commander of the garrison granted the request of Paul to speak to the people all the more readily, since he hoped to learn from the speech the real charges laid against him. The soldiers therefore having set Paul down and loosened at least one of his

chains, he stood at the head of the stairway and beckoned to the people with his characteristic gesture to indicate that he was about to address them. "What nobler spectacle than that of Paul at this moment! There he stands bound with two chains, ready to make his defense to the people. The Roman commander sits by to enforce order by his presence. An enraged populace looks up to him from below. Yet in the midst of so many dangers, how self-possessed is he, how tranquil!" (Chrysostomus.) When then there was much silence, when comparative quiet had been restored, the very fact that the man whom they had just made ready to murder was seeking to impart something to them, making some impression upon them, Paul spoke to them in the Hebrew dialect, that is, in the Aramaic language as it was then spoken generally by the Jews. He addressed them as brethren and fathers. Though they had almost succeeded in taking his life and had by no means relinquished the idea, yet Paul, neither in his tone nor in his words, showed any anger or resentment. With death staring him in the face, his thought was only for the spiritual welfare of his brethren according to the flesh, whether by any means he would still be able to save some of them. He asks them to hear from his lips the defense which he proposes to make to them now. And the fact that he employed the Aramaic dialect proved a further factor in quieting the multitude; they observed all the greater silence. Many members of the mob, hearing only half the charge and not understanding it correctly, had undoubtedly supposed that the man before them was himself a Gentile and not versed in either the Jewish language or the Jewish customs. And now Paul, in the honest attempt to gain his audience for at least an attentive listening to his apology, sets forth before them a few facts from his life. He was a Jewish man, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but educated in this very city of Jerusalem, and at the feet of Gamaliel, the celebrated teacher, at that, instructed according to the full strictness of the paternal Law. The Pharisees, to whom Gamaliel belonged, prided themselves upon the exactness of their interpretation of the Law and upon the literalness which they demanded in its observation. All this Paul had learned, in it he had been drilled. And therefore he had been ardent, zealous of God and for His honor, just as his hearers had proved themselves to be on that very day, Rom. 10, 2. Paul's words contain no accusation of malicious obstinacy, but are merely the statement of a fact which may well be made of use to them. Of his own zeal he says that he had persecuted this way, the persons that accepted the way of salvation through faith in the redemption of Jesus, unto death, this being his aim and interest in the matter. And in order to realize this purpose, he had bound and delivered into prison both men and women. And for the truth of this assertion the high priest of that year himself could bear witness and the entire Synedrion, for it was from them that he had received letters, credentials, to the brethren, whereupon he had traveled to Damascus, his object being to bind and to bring to Jerusalem also the disciples of that city, to lead them back in fetters, in order that adequate punishment might be meted out to them. Paul makes an open confession, withholding nothing from his hearers, and offering no excuse for his action. His narrative is a description of the state of the unconverted mind. In his unregenerate condition a person will either serve the fleshly lusts and trample upon the Law of God, or he will be zealous for an outward righteousness of the Law and despise the power and the beauty of the Gospel.

The vision on the way: V. 6. **And it came to pass that, as I made my journey, and was come nigh unto Damascus about noon, suddenly there shone from heaven a great light round about me.** V. 7. **And I fell unto the ground, and heard a voice saying unto me, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me?** V. 8. **And I answered, Who art Thou, Lord? And He said unto me, I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom thou persecutest.** V. 9. **And they that were with me saw indeed the light and were afraid, but they heard not the voice of Him that spake to me.** V. 10. **And I said, What shall I do, Lord? And the Lord said unto me, Arise and go into Damascus; and there it shall be told thee of all things which are appointed for thee to do.** V. 11. **And when I could not see for the glory of that light, being led by the hand of them that were with me, I came into Damascus.** The first part of Paul's address was intended not only to awaken sympathy for himself, but also curiosity as to the reason for his having changed so entirely in his views. The explanation is given in this part, with much vividness and attention to detail. It happened to him, as he had made the journey for which he had obtained credentials from the Jewish authorities, and had come near to the city of Damascus, that about noon, at midday, with the sun in full splendor, there suddenly, without warning, flashed about him a light out of the sky, whose brightness far surpassed that of the sun. He had fallen down to the solid ground, the pavement, of the road, and had heard and understood a voice speaking to him: Saul, Saul, why do you persecute Me? Upon his awe-stricken question as to the identity of the voice, which he himself had ascribed to the Lord, to Jesus, who had appeared to him in the light, he had received this information, that it was Jesus of Nazareth Himself, the One whom he was persecuting in His disciples, that had here appeared to him. His companions had seen the supernatural light, without, however, seeing Jesus, and while they had heard the sound of a voice, they had not

understood the words that had been spoken. Cp. chap. 9, 3—7. Upon his further timid question as to what he should do now, the Lord had given him directions to arise and go into the city of Damascus, where he would be told concerning everything which had been appointed for him to do. The Lord had arranged all in advance; his entire life and all the vicissitudes of his life had been mapped out by Jesus; his work for the remainder of his life was fully ordered and planned. And the vision, together with the voice, had not been a figment of his own imagination, for the heavenly glory of the light that had enveloped him had made him blind; he could not use his eyes, they refused their service. He had to be led by the hand, his blindness being absolute, by those that were with him, and thus came into the city. Thus the conversion of Paul was effected, and thus the conversion of every person takes place. There is no special inclination, disposition, or propensity in any human being for the faith in Jesus the Savior, but regeneration is entirely a work of the power and mercy of God. God changes the mind of man, who by his own reason and strength cannot believe in Jesus Christ, his Lord, and thus works faith in the Redeemer.

Paul and Ananias: V. 12. **And one Ananias, a devout man according to the Law, having a good report of all the Jews which dwelt there,** v. 13. **came unto me, and stood, and said unto me, Brother Saul, receive thy sight. And the same hour I looked up upon him.** V. 14. **And he said, The God of our fathers hath chosen thee that thou shouldest know His will and see that Just One, and shouldest hear the voice of His mouth.** V. 15. **For thou shalt be His witness unto all men of what thou hast seen and heard.** V. 16. **And now, why tarriest thou? Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.** Paul here from his personal experience, from the events which had been impressed upon his mind with indelible characters, gives a fuller account of the words of Ananias than that which had been reported in chapter 9. This Ananias was by no means a Gentile, nor a Jew without reputation and standing, but, as Paul emphasizes, a devout man, pious in accordance with Jewish law, according to their own standard, vouched for by all the Jews that lived in Damascus. Through him Paul received the commission to preach the Gospel of Christ, especially to the Gentiles, as he here is careful to bring out. For this Ananias came to him and stood by or over him as he lay or sat there, prostrate with sorrow, addressed him as a brother, and by a simple word of command performed the miracle of restoring his sight. In the same hour, that is, in the same instant, his sight was returned to him. And then Ananias had explained to him in just what way the Lord's plans had been carried out and were to be carried out. The God of their fathers, the true God, as the Jews worshiped Him, had appointed in advance that Paul was to know His will, to find out for what important duty he had been selected. His seeing the Just One and hearing the voice from His mouth in the vision near the city had also been arranged beforehand by God. This is an additional proof that Paul actually did see Jesus Christ. And this same voice of the Lord which had spoken to him before the city was now again addressing him with the commission that he should be a witness to the Lord to all men concerning what he had seen and heard. Why should there then be any cause for hesitation? Ananias had asked him. He had told him to arise, to be baptized, and thereby to have his sins washed away, and at the same time to call upon the name of the Lord. Note: Baptism is not a mere external form or symbol to signify the receipt of the forgiveness of sins before or after, but by the washing of the water in Baptism the sins are taken away, the filth of the soul is washed off; it is a washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost, Titus 3, 5. Through the name of Jesus and by faith in the Redeemer, which trusts the Word of God in Baptism, the great blessings are conferred and sealed.

The Lord's direct command to Paul: V. 17. **And it came to pass that, when I was come again to Jerusalem, even while I prayed in the Temple, I was in a trance;** v. 18. **and saw Him saying unto me, Make haste and get thee quickly out of Jerusalem; for they will not receive thy testimony concerning Me.** V. 19. **And I said, Lord, they know that I imprisoned and beat in every synagog them that believed on Thee;** v. 20. **and when the blood of Thy martyr Stephen was shed, I also was standing by, and consenting unto his death, and kept the raiment of them that slew him.** V. 21. **And He said unto me, Depart; for I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles.** Paul had intended his last words to win a favorable consideration of his cause, by showing the Jews that he, who had been a persecutor like themselves, had been changed to a believer and advocate of Jesus of Nazareth by miraculous evidence from heaven. He now wanted to present evidence that his mission among the Gentiles had been determined in the same way, by a direct revelation from heaven, which he, as they well knew, would not have dared to disobey. It had been when he returned to Jerusalem, on his first visit after his conversion, while he was offering prayer in the Temple, that he fell into a trance, was seized with supernatural ecstasy, in which he saw the Lord bidding him hurry and go out of Jerusalem with all speed, since the Jews would not accept his witness concerning the Savior. This account supplements that of chap. 9, 29. 30, since in that passage the actual personal danger is mentioned, which is here represented as being

the Lord's motive for sending him forth. "May not St. Luke be describing the occurrence in relation to the Jews and the Church, and St. Paul in relation to his own private personal history, St. Luke giving us the outward impulse, St. Paul the inner motive, so that the two causes, the one natural, the other supernatural, are mentioned side by side?" 86) Paul, as he relates, had at that time contradicted the Lord, giving as his reason that the Jews would surely receive the testimony from him of whom they knew that he had made it a practise to throw into prison and to beat the believers in Him in every synagog; also, that they were familiar with the fact of his having been present and gladly assenting, and even assuming the position of guardian of the witnesses' clothes, when they shed the blood of Stephen, His witness. But that argument had availed him nothing over against the will of the Lord, for the latter had merely insisted with greater emphasis: Go, I will send thee afar to the Gentiles. Before a different audience, and at a different time, this vindication of Paul might have proved acceptable, for they could not gainsay one single argument. But the statement that Paul was sent away from them because they were obstinate and hard-hearted, and that, in his case at least, the Gentiles were preferred to the Jews, that his mission was primarily to the despised heathen, was too much for this audience. It has ever been thus that the full, uncompromising truth of the Word of God, even if additional evidence from history was offered, has been received partly with skepticism, partly with open enmity. The heart of natural man is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked.

Paul and the Chief Captain. Acts 22, 22—30.

Paul asserts his citizenship: V. 22. **And they gave him audience unto this word, and then lifted up their voices and said, Away with such a fellow from the earth; for it is not fit that he should live.** V. 23. **And as they cried out, and cast off their clothes, and threw dust into the air,** v. 24. **the chief captain commanded him to be brought into the castle, and bade that he should be examined by scourging, that he might know wherefore they cried so against him.** V. 25. **And as they bound him with thongs, Paul said unto the centurion that stood by, Is it lawful for you to scourge a man that is a Roman, and uncondemned?** V. 26. **When the centurion heard that, he went and told the chief captain, saying, Take heed what thou doest; for this man is a Roman.** V. 27. **Then the chief captain came and said unto him, Tell me, art thou a Roman? He said, Yea.** V. 28. **And the chief captain answered, With a great sum obtained I this freedom. And Paul said, But I was free-born.** Paul's simple declaration of fact that he was called by the Lord by a direct revelation to preach the Gospel to the Gentiles threw the fanatical Jews into a perfect frenzy of fury. Up to this point in his speech they listened to him, but now they acted like men bereft of their senses. They lifted up their voices in angry shrieks, saying that such a man should promptly be destroyed from the face of the earth, since it was no longer proper to let him live, that he was not fit to live. This yelling they kept up, incidentally tossing their garments, their mantles, about in a fit of uncontrollable rage, and throwing dust up into the air. In their actions baffled fury and extreme contempt are combined to produce such an exhibition as only a mob deprived of its victim is able to present. The tribune now commanded Paul to be taken into the barracks, directing at the same time that the question should be put to him, that a hearing of his side of the matter should be made with torture, while the scourge was applied to him. This terrible method was resorted to by the Romans in the case of prisoners, especially of the lower class, in order to force a confession from their lips, if suitable evidence was not at hand. Thus the tribune wanted to find out why it was that the people shouted at him in that way. But as they had stretched him forward by bending his back over the whipping-post and were getting ready to fasten him with straps, Paul asked the centurion that was standing by and superintending the ghastly work whether it was permitted to scourge a Roman citizen without a proper trial. The question, as humbly as it was put, was not without its irony and reproach for the proceeding adopted in his case. In great consternation the centurion made a report to his superior officer, the commander of the garrison: What are you going to do? This man is a Roman citizen. This information brought the chiliarch in a great hurry. He asked Paul directly whether he were a Roman citizen, and Paul answered in the affirmative. With some doubt in his voice, the tribune then told Paul that he had acquired his Roman citizenship by the outlay of a considerable sum of money, thus confessing to an act of bribery. For citizenship in Rome was properly obtained either by being conferred by the Roman senate for meritorious conduct, or it was inherited from a father who was a Roman citizen, or it was the birthright of him that was born in a free city. And therefore Paul, in this case, could state with justifiable pride that he had been born a Roman citizen. It is altogether right and to be approved if Christians under circumstances make use of their rights as citizens.

Arrangements for a decent hearing: V. 29. **Then straightway they departed from him which should have examined him; and the chief captain also was afraid after he knew that he was a Roman, and because**

86) *Expositor's Greek Testament*, II, 460.

he had bound him. V. 30. On the morrow, because he would have known the certainty wherefore he was accused of the Jews, he loosed him from his bands, and commanded the chief priests and all their Council to appear, and brought Paul down, and set him before them. The declaration of Paul that he was a free-born Roman citizen had its immediate effect. Those that were to put the question to him with torture stepped back immediately, with alacrity, for the torture was illegal in the case of a Roman citizen, although it might be employed in the case of slaves and foreigners. Even the chiliarch felt rather uncomfortable with fear, since he had now found out that Paul was a Roman citizen, and because he had bound him. If Paul had been of a vindictive nature, he might have caused the tribune some difficulty, but revenge did not enter his thoughts, since his object had been gained. But the commander now acted more carefully. It was still his firm resolve to find out the real reason why Paul was being accused by the Jews, what the trouble really was about. So he had Paul freed from his bonds, and commanded that the high priests and the entire Synedrion come together, the hearing probably taking place in their own council-chamber or at some place in the city outside of the Tower of Antonia, most likely in the Court of the Gentiles, where the Romans were permitted to appear, since he led Paul down from the hill and placed him in front of them. Thus the prophecy of Agabus had been fulfilled, and Paul was in the hands of the Gentiles, delivered there by the hands of his own countrymen.

Summary. *Paul's speech to the Jews, first listened to in interested silence, is interrupted by shouts of anger, after which Paul saves himself from a scourging at the hands of the soldiers by declaring his Roman citizenship.*

CHAPTER 23.

The Hearing in the Presence of the Sanhedrin. Acts 23, 1—11.

Paul rebukes the high priest: **V. 1. And Paul, earnestly beholding the Council, said, Men and brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day. V. 2. And the high priest Ananias commanded them that stood by him to smite him on the mouth. V. 3. Then said Paul unto him, God shall smite thee, thou whited wall; for sittest thou to judge me after the Law, and commandest me to be smitten contrary to the Law? V. 4. And they that stood by said, Revilest thou God's high priest? V. 5. Then said Paul, I wist not, brethren, that he was the high priest; for it is written, Thou shalt not speak evil of the ruler of thy people.** The hearing had been opened by the Roman tribune, Lysias. The members of the Sanhedrin were sitting or standing around in a semicircle, with Paul facing them, and the commander with the guard near by. The Jewish rulers had been summoned by the Roman chiliarch to give testimony, to bring their charges against Paul. This fact makes the entire situation clear. "When we consider the circumstances, it is clear that this was not a formal meeting of the Council of the nation; it was an assemblage of leading men hastily summoned as advisers by the Roman officer in command at Jerusalem. The officer was in authority; he was the one man that could judge and give a decision; the rest were only his assessors. By no means could a proper meeting of the Council be called in the way followed on this occasion." 87) Paul was not present as under the jurisdiction of the Sanhedrin, but as a Roman citizen in charge of the Roman commander of Jerusalem. This is evident also from his entire behavior. For, instead of waiting for the Jews to open the meeting, he looked round upon them with his characteristic steadfast, undaunted gaze, and then calmly invited their charges by stating, with evident composure, that in all good conscience he had comported himself before God until this day. Note that he addresses them as brethren, thus placing himself on a level with them. And he calmly asserts his innocence of any wrongdoing in the sense which the Jews urged, for he uses a word which literally means that he has done his full duty as a citizen of the commonwealth of God, and that he has respected and observed its laws. But Paul's statement roused the fiercest resentment of the high priest, Ananias by name. This Ananias was not the high priest of the gospels, but had been appointed to the office by Herod of Chalcis. He was sent to Rome as a prisoner by Quadratus, governor of Syria, on account of a quarrel with the Samaritans; but he won his case and returned to Jerusalem. Forgetting that he was not the chairman of this meeting, and that Paul was not under his jurisdiction, he called out to those that stood near the accused to strike him on the mouth, thus signifying that he believed Paul to be uttering a base falsehood. Paul's rebuke was prompt and to the point. He called him a whitewashed wall, as Christ had called the Pharisees whited sepulchers, Matt. 23, 27. The coat of whitewash was intended to cover the flimsiness and the filth beneath. He had bidden Paul to be struck: God would strike him for his hypocritical behavior; for there he was sitting as one of the judges according to the Law, and against that Law he commanded Paul to be struck, Lev. 19, 35; Deut. 25, 1. 2.

87) Ramsay, *The Bearing of Recent Discovery*, 90.

The Lord did punish this high priest in a terrible way, for a few years later he perished in a tumult raised by his own son. The bystanders, shocked by the words of Paul, asked whether he would thus revile the high priest of God, that is, God's representative, while he was performing the duties of his ministry, Deut. 17, 12. Paul's answer may be taken as an excuse, or apology. Ananias was present merely as a member of the Sanhedrin; he neither occupied the president's chair, nor did he wear the robes characteristic of his office; and Paul did not know him personally. He therefore may have intended to acknowledge that his conduct, so far as the reviling was concerned, was not in agreement with Ex. 22, 28. Luther believes with Augustine that the reply of Paul was biting irony and mockery.[88]) It is perfectly right and justifiable, if Christians criticize and rebuke the sins of the government, but this must always be done with due respect.

A division among the members of the Sanhedrin: V. 6. **But when Paul perceived that the one part were Sadducees and the other Pharisees, he cried out in the Council, Men and brethren, I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee; of the hope and resurrection of the dead I am called in question.** V. 7. **And when he had so said, there arose a dissension between the Pharisees and the Sadducees; and the multitude was divided.** V. 8. **For the Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, neither angel, nor spirit; but the Pharisees confess both.** V. 9. **And there arose a great cry; and the scribes that were of the Pharisees' part arose and strove, saying, We find no evil in this man; but if a spirit or an angel hath spoken to him, let us not fight against God.** Paul had come down to the meeting in the hope that there would be a real hearing. He had attempted a calm defense, which had been rudely interrupted by an unwarranted interference of the high priest. Since neither a fair inquiry nor a just decision was to be expected in the presence of such prejudiced fanatics, he now adopted a different method. Knowing that a part of the Sanhedrin, the smaller portion, consisted of Sadducees, and the other of Pharisees, he called out before them all that he was a Pharisee and a son or disciple of Pharisees. This statement was not a petty trick or malicious deception, as some have thought. Every one in the assembly knew that he was a Christian; his assertion was therefore understood by them as it should be understood by us, that he had been a member of that sect and still agreed with them, as many other former Pharisees did, in certain doctrines. It was concerning one of these that he was now on trial, namely, that of the hope and the reality of the resurrection of the dead. This was literally true, and cannot be regarded as a subterfuge; for the fundamental doctrine of the Gospel, as preached by Paul, was the fact that Christ had risen from the dead, and that because of His resurrection all believers were sure of their own rising unto eternal life. No sooner had Paul said this than there was a controversy, a dissension, a contention of the Pharisees and the Sadducees. Before this the body of the Sanhedrin, the entire mass, had been united against Paul, but now they were divided into two parties, into the two factions which were usually at enmity with each other on account of their different doctrinal positions. For, as Luke here inserts by way of explanation, the Sadducees are in the habit of saying that there is no resurrection, nor angel, nor spirit. Their position was one of negation, of denial. But the Pharisees confessed and believed in both the resurrection of the dead and the existence of spirits. The uproar over the matter increased with every moment, finally becoming violent. It was the custom in the debates of the Jews to walk over to the side of him whose cause one espoused, thus incidentally recording one's vote. And so here some of the scribes among the Pharisees openly took Paul's part, going over and standing near him, and contending forcibly, arguing very vehemently in his favor. They maintained that they found nothing evil in the accused, and what if a spirit had spoken with him or an angel, as he had stated on the previous day? — that was no reason why the man should be condemned. Thus the Jewish rulers were in a worse predicament than ever. The commander's purpose in calling the meeting was to have the Jews show cause why they had clamored for the death of Paul, and here they sat, not only without any accusation that would have had any weight in the eyes of the Romans, but actually engaged in a bitter controversy among themselves. Thus the dissension of the unbelievers has often redounded to the liberty or to some other benefit of the believers. That is one of the ways in which God keeps and protects His Church in the midst of this evil world, that He creates dissension in the midst of its enemies.

Paul reassured by the Lord: V. 10. **And when there arose a great dissension, the chief captain, fearing lest Paul should have been pulled in pieces of them, commanded the soldiers to go down, and to take him by force from among them, and to bring him into the castle.** V. 11. **And the night following the Lord stood by him and said, Be of good cheer, Paul; for as thou hast testified of Me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome.** As the uproar of the Jews concerning Paul became greater and more violent with every minute, the chiliarch, more of an interested spectator of the scene than an active participant, became apprehensive, began to fear that Paul would actually be torn to pieces by them. Those that took his part held him in order to protect him, others laid violent hands upon him to jerk him away, and thus he was dragged to and fro. Lysias

88) Luther, 19, 695; 22, 1728.

therefore gave command by an orderly that the body of soldiers which was always in readiness should march down to the Temple area from the level of Antonia and tear the prisoner out of their midst, and then lead him to the barracks. So Lysias was once more disappointed in his attempts to find out the facts in Paul's case; but he must certainly have concluded that the Jews had no charge of a political nature against him which they could or would formulate. But at this point the Lord came to the assistance of His servant. In the night following the arraignment before the Sanhedrin the Lord Himself, in a vision, stood by or over him as he slept, and reassured him, telling him that just as he had borne confident witness of the facts concerning Him in Jerusalem, had preached the Gospel of His grace openly and fearlessly, so it would be necessary for him, according to God's will, to bear witness also in Rome. Paul had planned to visit Rome at the first opportunity; he had written the Christians of Rome an epistle containing a full exposition of Christian doctrine; and he would yet see the city, though probably not as he had planned. The fortunes of the Church are in the hands of the exalted Christ. He it is that is near to His faithful confessors on earth at all times, who strengthens and confirms them and directs the course of the Gospel according to His will.

The Plot of the Jews. Acts 23, 12—22.

The murderous design of the Jews: V. 12. **And when it was day, certain of the Jews banded together, and bound themselves under a curse, saying that they would neither eat nor drink till they had killed Paul.** V. 13. **And they were more than forty which had made this conspiracy.** V. 14. **And they came to the chief priests and elders and said, We have bound ourselves under a great curse that we will eat nothing until we have slain Paul.** V. 15. **Now, therefore, ye with the Council signify to the chief captain that he bring him down unto you to-morrow as though ye would enquire something more perfectly concerning him; and we, or ever he come near, are ready to kill him.** It is not difficult to imagine what happened in the assembly of the Jews after Paul had been torn from them by the Roman soldiers, how they blamed and cursed one another for their foolishness in letting their intended victim escape, how they vowed to find some way of removing the hated preacher of Christ at the first opportunity. And this chance apparently offered soon. For on the following day the Jews, a certain number of them that were exceptionally violent in the expression of their hatred against Paul, formed a conspiracy, by solemnly binding one another with an oath of execration, placing themselves under an anathema, making themselves liable to the most terrible punishments of God in case they either ate or drank before they had killed Paul. These forty odd Jews that thus became guilty of an almost unbelievably blasphemous use of the name of God very likely belonged to that class of fierce zealots known as assassins, who shrank back from no crime in the interest of what they believed to be true orthodoxy. Evidently they felt pretty sure of their ground, for they did not hesitate to come to the chief priests and the elders and lay their plan before them, not officially, perhaps, but with the full expectation of unofficial recognition and approval. They frankly told them that they had bound themselves under a great curse to partake of no food until they had killed Paul. But they needed the cooperation of the chief priests in carrying out their murderous plan, their suggestion being, briefly, that the Jewish rulers should intimate to the Roman tribune that they had the intention, with the entire Synedrion, of making a more exact examination of Paul's case, as though they would want to judge of his matter more accurately. For this reason the tribune should lead the prisoner down to them. And the assassins were ready, they were fully prepared, to murder Paul on the way, before ever he would come near to the place of the assembly, in order that no suspicion would attach to the members of the Sanhedrin as to complicity in the crime. It was truly a devilish scheme, apparently destined to be successful. Thus the hatred of the world against the confessors of Christ to this day will not hesitate to make use of extreme measures, of blasphemous oaths and plots and murders, to hinder the course of the Gospel.

The plot revealed: V. 16. **And when Paul's sister's son heard of their lying in wait, he went and entered into the castle and told Paul.** V. 17. **Then Paul called one of the centurions unto him and said, Bring this young man unto the chief captain; for he hath a certain thing to tell him.** V. 18. **So he took him, and brought him to the chief captain, and said, Paul, the prisoner, called me unto him, and prayed me to bring this young man unto thee, who hath something to say unto thee.** V. 19. **Then the chief captain took him by the hand, and went with him aside privately, and asked him, What is that thou hast to tell me?** V. 20. **And he said, The Jews have agreed to desire thee that thou wouldest bring down Paul to-morrow into the Council, as though they would enquire somewhat of him more perfectly.** V. 21. **But do not thou yield unto them; for there lie in wait for him of them more than forty men, which have bound themselves with an oath that they will neither eat nor drink till they have killed him; and now are they ready, looking for a promise from thee.** V. 22. **So the chief captain then let the young man depart, and charged him, See thou tell no man that thou hast showed these things to me.** We have here the first

and only direct reference to the family to which Paul belonged, his sister's son, his nephew, being introduced into the story. Whether Paul's sister lived in Jerusalem, or whether the young man had come up for the festival of Pentecost, cannot be determined. In some way this young man heard of the plot, received the full information concerning the scheme of the Jews, their ambush. His hurry is apparent from the text, for he suddenly appeared at Antonia, came in upon them, and entered into the barracks. Evidently Paul's friends were allowed to visit him, and therefore no one objected to the young man's going to him. So he announced, related, to Paul the entire story. Paul realized at once that the plot could be foiled only by observing the utmost secrecy, that lack of proper caution might precipitate a serious crisis. So he called one of the centurions to him and requested him to lead the young man to the commander, since he had an announcement to make to him, had some news to tell him. Accordingly, the centurion had the young man accompany him to the chiliarch, where he introduced him with the remark that Paul, the prisoner, had called him and asked him to lead this young man to him, since he had something to tell him. The chiliarch felt at once that there must be something unusual in the air, and therefore he, with fine tact and with a reassuring gesture, took the young man by the hand and led him aside and asked him: What is the news that you have for me? This treatment gave the informant the necessary confidence, and he quickly told his story, adding such touches as reveal his deep interest. The Jews had taken counsel together, made the plan, to ask the commander of the garrison that he bring Paul down to the Synedrion, as though he wanted to examine his case more exactly, look into it with greater care than on the previous day. And here the excitement gets the better of the narrator, and he earnestly urges the chiliarch not to trust them, since more than forty of the Jews were lying in ambush, all of them having bound themselves under a dreadful curse neither to eat nor to drink till they had put Paul out of the way, until they had killed him. And even now they were ready, awaiting only the promise of the Roman tribune. This would be their signal to prepare for the murderous assault. In this way did the Lord, and in the same manner does He now, frustrate the evil designs of the enemies of the Church and of His servants. Without His permission not a hair of their head may fall to the ground. With a warning as to the necessity of the strictest secrecy Lysias dismissed the young man.

Paul Brought to Caesarea. Acts 23, 23—35.

The preparations for the journey: V. 23. **And he called unto him two centurions, saying, Make ready two hundred soldiers to go to Caesarea, and horsemen three score and ten, and spearmen two hundred, at the third hour of the night;** v. 24. **and provide them beasts that they may set Paul on, and bring him safe unto Felix, the governor.** V. 25. **And he wrote a letter after this manner:** v. 26. **Claudius Lysias unto the most excellent Governor Felix sendeth greeting.** V. 27. **This man was taken of the Jews, and should have been killed of them; then came I with an army and rescued him, having understood that he was a Roman.** V. 28. **And when I would have known the cause wherefore they accused him, I brought him forth into their council;** v. 29. **whom I perceived to be accused of questions of their law, but to have nothing laid to his charge worthy of death or of bonds.** V. 30. **And when it was told me how that the Jews laid wait for the man, I sent straightway to thee, and gave commandment to his accusers also to say before thee what they had against him. Farewell.** It is to the credit of Lysias that he chose the course which both justice and prudence dictated. By ignoring the information received he might have become an accomplice in the murder of Paul. By slaying the assassins as they were making their assault, he would have made the Jews his bitter enemies. But he acted quickly and prudently. He summoned two of the centurions in his command and ordered them to make ready for a march to Caesarea, have in readiness to march, about nine o'clock in the evening, two hundred men infantry, heavily armed soldiers, and seventy cavalry, and two hundred light-armed soldiers, javelin-throwers or lance-bearers. Saddle-animals were also to be provided, in order that they might set Paul on one of them, with a change, if necessary, and lead him safely down to Felix, the governor, who resided at Caesarea, the political capital of the province. If Lysias had only one thousand men in his command at Jerusalem, 760 infantry and 240 cavalry, he reduced his force considerably in order to provide a safe escort to Paul, but the gravity of the situation was fully appreciated by him, and he took his measures accordingly. He also wrote a letter to the governor as to the man higher in rank and the highest court in the province. This letter is interesting because colored by the understanding of Lysias, and because it naturally aims to place his own conduct in the most favorable light. Luke gives a summary of this letter. It opens with the usual complimentary, introductory greeting of the writer to the addressee. Lysias says of Paul, whom he mentions with respect, that he had been taken, laid hold on, by the Jews and was about to be killed by them, when he, appearing seemingly just in time with the soldiers under his command, had taken him away and thus rescued him. Here the fact that Lysias refers to the army would naturally imply that it took all the soldiers of the garrison to quell the disturbance, and would impress the governor with his circumspection.

The same is true of the statement that he had done so after having learned that Paul was a Roman citizen. Here also the tribune, for the sake of emphasizing his zeal in the public service, strains the truth, for he found out only after the rescue that Paul was a Roman. The writer then continues to tell how he had earnestly wanted to find out the reason why they were accusing him, and had taken him into a meeting of their Synedrion. There he had found out only so much that he was accused concerning certain demands of the Jews' law, but that he had committed no crime which merited death or even imprisonment. In the mean time he had been informed that some of them were plotting against this man, to take his life, wherefore he had sent to the governor without delay (again emphasizing his zeal), incidentally announcing to the accusers that they must bring their matter before the governor. The entire letter shows that Lysias was making every effort to impress Felix favorably, for in the great game of politics one never can tell just how much a good impression may be worth, and advancement was always welcome. Christians will make the application of such stories by remembering the Lord's injunction to be wise as serpents and harmless as doves, Matt. 10, 16.

The journey and the arrival in Caesarea: V. 31. **Then the soldiers, as it was commanded them, took Paul and brought him by night to Antipatris.** V. 32. **On the morrow they left the horsemen to go with him, and returned to the castle;** v. 33. **who, when they came to Caesarea and delivered the epistle to the governor, presented Paul also before him.** V. 34. **And when the governor had read the letter, he asked of what province he was. And when he understood that he was of Cilicia,** v. 35. **I will hear thee, said he, when thine accusers are also come. And he commanded him to be kept in Herod's judgment-hall.** The start from Jerusalem was made by night, to attract as little attention as possible, and the armed escort was so strong that it could easily have warded off the attack of a band of assassins. The fact also that the soldiers left by the road to the north served to have them escape notice. Four miles to the north they marched, over the old road whose paving stones are still visible in places, and then turned to the east across the mountains of Ephraim and down into the beautiful plain of Sharon, where Antipatris was located. This was a forced march of fully thirty miles, and must have been a great strain to Paul. But they were now beyond all possible danger of an attack from Jerusalem. The four hundred men infantry therefore turned back at this point and returned to the barracks at the Tower of Antonia in Jerusalem, letting the troopers continue the journey with Paul. These men arrived in Caesarea in due time, delivered the letter to the governor, and presented Paul to him. The procurator read the letter and then asked Paul what kind of province he belonged to, imperial or senatorial, since he needed this information to complete the report of Lysias concerning the case. "A procurator of Judea, like Felix, was subordinate only to the governor of Syria, inasmuch as the latter could bring his supreme power to bear in cases of necessity. The military command and the independent jurisdiction of the procurator gave him practically sole power in all ordinary transactions, but the governor could take the superior command if he had reason to fear revolutionary or other serious difficulties."[89] When Felix had found out that Paul hailed from Cilicia, and could thus enter the case properly, he promised him a judicial hearing as soon as his accusers would present themselves. In the mean time the governor gave command that Paul should be kept in the praetorium of Herod, the palace which Herod Agrippa I had erected there, chap. 12, 19, and which contained also a guard-room, where Paul might be confined. Note: We find Paul here once more under the protection of the Roman government. For that reason the government has been ordained of God, to protect peaceful citizens, and therefore also the Christians, against sedition and violence. Aud thus the Lord holds His protecting hand over them that are His. Unless He permits it for reasons of His own, the raving and raging of all the enemies can bring no harm to His Church.

Summary. *Paul is arraigned before the Roman tribunal in the presence of the Sanhedrin, and is made the object of a murderous plot of the Jews, upon whose exposure he is sent to Felix, the governor, by Lysias, the Roman tribune at Jerusalem.*

89) *Expositor's Greek Testament*, II, 476.

CHAPTER 24.

Paul's Trial before Felix. Acts 24, 1—22.

The delegation of Jews from Jerusalem: V. 1. **And after five days Ananias, the high priest, descended with the elders, and with a certain orator named Tertullus, who informed the governor against Paul.** V. 2. **And when he was called forth, Tertullus began to accuse him, saying, Seeing that by thee we enjoy great quietness, and that very worthy deeds are done unto this nation by thy providence,** v. 3. **we accept it always and in all places, most noble Felix, with all thankfulness.** V. 4. **Notwithstanding, that I be not further tedious unto**

thee, I pray thee that thou wouldest hear us of thy clemency a few words. Paul was now once more in Caesarea, in the very city where the prophet Agabus had predicted his capture by the Gentiles, chap. 21, 11. A few short weeks ago he had here enjoyed the hospitality of Philip and the friendly society of the disciples of the city, and now he was a prisoner in the hands of the Romans and for the present kept in close confinement in the palace of Herod. But after five days, counting from the day after Paul had left Jerusalem, when the Jews received formal notice from Lysias, the high priest Ananias with several of the elders and a certain orator, Tertullus, made the journey from Jerusalem down to Caesarea. So the Jewish leaders had lost no time in selecting a representative delegation from the Sanhedrin, with Ananias himself as the head; and they had engaged the services of a Roman attorney, Tertullus, as they now had to appear in a regular Roman court and therefore must have a lawyer familiar with the procedure of such a court. This delegation, through its attorney, formally laid information against Paul before the procurator, stating their charges in the manner demanded by the Roman legal practise. When Paul was then summoned to appear before these accusers, Tertullus, with great oratorical exertion, began his speech of accusation against the prisoner. It is significant that the attorney tries to bolster up the weakness of the cause he represents by a great mass of words. The introduction of his speech was intended exclusively to flatter the governor and to engage his good will in behalf of the Jews. The speaker, in gushing terms, praised the uniform, complete peace which had come upon them, which they were enjoying through him, and the improvements, reforms, or very worthy deeds which had become the property of the people through his foresight, who had planned all these benefits for the nation in advance. And all this, as Tertullus emphasizes with great show of servility, the Jews accepted at all times and in all places, with all proper gratefulness. The full name of the most honorable Felix, as Tertullus calls the governor, the procurator of Judea, was Antonius Felix. He was a freedman of the emperor Claudius and a brother of Pallas, who was a favorite of Nero. He entered upon his duties in A. D. 53, after the deposition of Cumanus, but, as the historian Tacitus says, he exercised the power of a king in the spirit of a slave, a fact which later caused his recall. The first statement of Tertullus, that Felix had restored and maintained peace in the province, was true, in a measure, since he had suppressed some bands of robbers that had infested the country; but it was offset by the fact that he employed assassins to murder the high priest Jonathan, and that he was subject to violent and selfish passions. The attorney's next reference to measures of reform must be discounted by the fact that the historians picture his arbitrariness, which finally made unrest and rebellion permanent. And the assertion that the Jewish nation was everywhere and always grateful to Felix for his services was afterwards shown to be untrue by the fact that the Jews themselves were his accusers in Rome. We can therefore, at best, regard the title as merely an empty form. When politeness and tact degenerate into base flattery and mock servility, truth and honesty are inevitably driven away. This impression is heightened by the next words. For Tertullus now acts as though he had not really begun to mention all the praiseworthy deeds of Felix, that, if time but permitted, he would gladly continue in the same strain indefinitely. But he intimates that the governor is so busy with all his plans for further reforms that he must not hinder and weary him by a tedious recital of all his excellencies. He will therefore consider that enough has been said, and merely beg that the governor would kindly listen to them, and, if possible, grant their desire according to his clemency. He promises to be brief, in order not to strain the courteous attention of Felix. An example of fawning, sickening hypocrisy.

The charges against Paul: V. 5. **For we have found this man a pestilent fellow and a mover of sedition among all the Jews throughout the world and a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes;** v. 6. **who also hath gone about to profane the Temple; whom we took and would have judged according to our Law.** V. 7. **But the chief captain Lysias came upon us, and with great violence took him away out of our hands,** v. 8. **commanding his accusers to come unto thee; by examining of whom thyself mayest take knowledge of all these things whereof we accuse him.** V. 9. **And the Jews also assented, saying that these things were so.** After the rhetorical promise of the introduction, the statement of the charges against Paul is all the weaker by contrast. Tertullus declares that the Jews found this man a regular pest, an exceedingly bad and wicked person; an inciter of seditions to all the Jews in the whole world, throughout the length and breadth of the Roman Empire, a destroyer of all peace and order by creating bickerings; a ringleader of the sect of Nazarenes, the contemptuous epithet applied to the followers of Jesus. This man, against whom these charges were preferred, had, as the crowning indignity of his career and as an expression of the low character ascribed to him, made an attempt to profane the Temple. The Jews had thereupon apprehended, arrested him, with the intention, as Tertullus asserts, of giving him a fair trial according to their Law. That was again straining the truth with a vengeance, for the affair in the Temple had been the action of the mob violence of the people, and could be interpreted in no other way. But Lysias, the chiliarch, as

the attorney states with a great show of outraged justice, had come upon them and had led the prisoner away, out of their hands, with great force, with armed violence, thus interfering, as Tertullus implied, with the Law according to which the Jews were permitted by the Romans to put any person to death that profaned the Temple. And then Lysias had commanded the accusers of Paul to go to the governor, and the latter could now, — so the attorney concludes his speech, — by examining the prisoner, gain an understanding, come to a conclusion, in regard to the accusations which they brought against him. His decision, as the tone of Tertullus implies, could not possibly be made otherwise than in favor of the Jews. It was a fine fabric of lies which the skilful lawyer had constructed by distorting the facts, adding motives that had not existed at the time when certain deeds were performed, and making statements concerning the character of the prisoner which were nothing but calumnies. But the Jews joined in the charge, confirming their lawyer's words, and falsely alleging that all those things were true, that such were the facts in the case. By such means do unbelievers and enemies of Christ attempt to hinder and destroy the truth.

Paul denies the charges: V. 10. **Then Paul, after that the governor had beckoned unto him to speak, answered, Forasmuch as I know that thou hast been of many years a judge unto this nation, I do the more cheerfully answer for myself,** v. 11. **because that thou mayest understand that there are yet but twelve days since I went up to Jerusalem for to worship.** V. 12. **And they neither found me in the Temple disputing with any man, neither raising up the people, neither in the synagogs, nor in the city;** v. 13. **neither can they prove the things whereof they now accuse me.** Paul's position in this matter was very unpleasant, for he was suddenly, by the beckoning hand of the governor, placed face to face with the necessity of answering to charges of a very grave nature, some of which, in fact, were serious enough, if sustained, to result in severe punishment, if not in death. But he relied upon the promise of the Lord for mouth and wisdom, Luke 21, 15. His answer is conspicuously free from the fawning flattery that had been the outstanding feature of the speech of Tertullus. He relied upon the fact, which he knew to be true, that Felix had for many years been a judge to this people, that he had been the highest judicial authority in the country for some time, and had thus acquired a personal knowledge of its public affairs and some insight into the religious customs of the Jews. Felix had now been procurator of Judea some six or seven years, a comparatively long period as governorships went in that country, and was bound to have been in constant touch with Jewish life and manners. This fact therefore gave Paul the necessary courage to make his defense with all openness and confidence. As his first point Paul stated, since Felix therefrom could gain accurate knowledge of the situation, that it was not more than twelve days since he had gone up to Jerusalem to worship. This statement may easily be justified in various ways, as a number of historians have shown, the exact sequence of events being immaterial. Two facts stand out in this sentence, namely, that the express purpose of Paul in going to Jerusalem was to worship, and that the shortness of the time would not possibly have permitted him to foment an uprising. And therefore he flatly denies the charges which had been preferred by the Jews through their attorney. They had not found him disputing, arguing, quarreling with any one; they had not come upon him in the act of inciting an uprising of the people, neither in the synagogs nor in any part of the city. They could not offer or furnish any proofs to the governor concerning any of the charges which they were now bringing against him. Paul's simple assertion of the truth was not only a general denial of the charge that he had been an agitator among the Jews in all parts of the empire, but it incidentally challenged the opponents to bring proofs of their accusations. Thus Paul had disposed of the opening charges of Tertullus in a form of self-evident truthfulness which could not fail of making a deep impression. If the same methods are followed by the Christians in our days, they will usually aid their cause better than by cowering fear and false submission.

The charge of being a Nazarene: V. 14. **But this I confess unto thee that after the way which they call heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the Law and in the prophets;** v. 15. **and have hope toward God, which they themselves also allow, that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust.** V. 16. **And herein do I exercise myself to have always a conscience void of offense toward God and toward men.** Paul here took up the next charge, that of being a ringleader of the Nazarenes. Without referring to the title bestowed upon him, he proudly confesses to the truth of that charge, if that be a crime, incidentally including, however, a rebuke to the Jews themselves. After the way which they were pleased to call a sect, a schismatic party, he served the God of the fathers. The thought underlying Paul's words was that Christianity was not a separation, but rather a fulfilling of the Jewish religion and belief. There is no difference in kind, but only in degree between the Old and New Testament religion; the Jewish patriarchs were saved by their faith in the coming Messiah, while the Christians are saved by their

faith in the Christ that has come and fulfilled the chief prophecies of old. In this way Paul's faith was placed in all the things that were written throughout the Law and in the prophets; only Paul knew that the Messianic hopes had been realized in Jesus of Nazareth, while his accusers were still groping about in the darkness and blindness of a hope that would never be fulfilled. And he cherished the same hope toward God as these men also accepted, namely, that a resurrection of the just as well as of the unjust would surely take place. Note that Paul here makes no distinction between the high priest, a Sadducee, and the representatives of the Sanhedrin that were Pharisees, preferring to regard them as simply Jews that held the hope of their entire nation. For that reason, since he was firm in this belief, Paul exercised himself, he earnestly endeavored also, as they did, to have a clear conscience toward God and toward all men everywhere. The strongest motive and impelling power in a Christian is his faith in the Word of God and his hope of the resurrection of the dead. Note: The defense of Paul, in this section especially, is a fine apology of Christianity and the Christian faith. Thus the opponents of the true faith are silenced, when they cannot prove their assertions against the Christians, and when, in addition, the faith and the life of the Christians can truthfully be urged in their defense. The Christians do not constitute a new sect; their religion is the true religion, as it was in the world from the beginning; they believe in the Word of God and have the hope of the resurrection of the body and of eternal life.

The conclusion of Paul's defense: V. 17. **Now after many years I came to bring alms to my nation and offerings.** V. 18. **Whereupon certain Jews from Asia found me purified in the Temple, neither with multitude nor with tumult,** v. 19. **who ought to have been here before thee and object if they had aught against me.** V. 20. **Or else let these same here say if they have found any evil doing in me while I stood before the Council,** v. 21. **except it be for this one voice, that I cried standing among them, Touching the resurrection of the dead I am called in question by you this day.** V. 22. **And when Felix heard these things, having more perfect knowledge of that way, he deferred them and said, When Lysias, the chief captain, shall come down, I will know the uttermost of your matter.** Having disposed of the charges of the Jews and showing their utter untenableness, Paul now turns the tables upon his accusers and mentions some considerations which place them in a very unfavorable light. He states the purpose of the present trip. After a number of years, a matter of some eight or nine years, he had come up to bring alms to his nation, the collection which had been made in the congregations of Macedonia, Achaia, and Asia, and to offer sacrifices, the usual sacrifices of the festival, or he may include the offerings made for the sake of the Nazirite Jewish Christians. In the performance of these religious duties, after he had been purified in the Temple, certain Jews from Asia had found him, but not with a crowd which he might have been trying to incite to sedition, nor with any tumult which may have resulted from any intrigues of his. These Jews were the ones that had first seized him (a delicate correction of the statement of v. 6), and their place it would properly have been to be present at this trial and to make accusation if the words of Lysias had been obeyed. It was a very significant fact, as Paul indicates, that the only personal witnesses of what he did in the Temple were not present to testify against him. And to this telling shot Paul adds another semi-sarcastic remark. He challenges these very men present here to state what fault they found in him as he was standing before the Synedrion at the hearing of Lysias, unless it were regarding that one utterance when he cried out as he was standing there that it was on account of the resurrection of the dead that he was on trial to-day before them. This was a most effective taunt, since it would show Felix that they were moved against him by party jealousy, that the entire contention was about a matter in which the Jews themselves were at variance. Altogether, the defense of Paul was a brilliant justification of himself and his cause, utterly overthrowing the fabric of lies which Tertullus had reared. And Felix could not but feel this. But he acted in a characteristic way. He put off the Jews and remanded Paul for another hearing, as though it were not possible at once to pass a judgment of acquittal or condemnation before further inquiry in the matter. Felix had a more exact and detailed knowledge of the way, of the Christian religion, since he had not been blind all these years and there was a Christian congregation in Caesarea. He knew that the Christians were harmless, innocent persons. On the other hand, reasons of policy forbade his taking the part of Paul openly and thus provoking the enmity of the Jews. So he stated as the reason for his action that he must wait until Lysias, the chiliarch, came down, when he would be able to render a decision with reference to the testimony from all sides. Note: Felix here, like Pontius Pilate, is an example of an unjust judge, one that will indeed hinder gross violence, but at the same time courts the favor of the people and curtails the rights of the believers.

Paul Retained a Prisoner. Acts 24, 23—27.

V. 23. **And he commanded a centurion to keep Paul and to let him have liberty, and that he should forbid none of his acquaintance to minister or come unto him.** V. 24. **And after certain days, when Felix came with his wife Drusilla, which was a**

Jewess, he sent for Paul, and heard him concerning the faith in Christ. V. 25. And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled and answered, Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee. V. 26. He hoped also that money should have been given him of Paul, that he might loose him; wherefore he sent for him the oftener, and communed with him. V. 27. But after two years Porcius Festus came into Felix' room; and Felix, willing to show the Jews a pleasure, left Paul bound. The case of Paul had been continued indefinitely; he was retained in custody only for reasons of expediency and policy on the part of Felix. But the procurator at least had enough humaneness left to make Paul's confinement as light as possible. He gave definite orders to a certain centurion to keep him in custody, thus making the officer responsible for his safekeeping. At the same time, however, he should be given indulgence, should be permitted a certain freedom of movement, and no one of his own people, the members of the local Christian congregation and others, should be hindered from serving him. Any kind of personal service, even in small matters, was allowed, the indulgence extending as far as the centurion might consider safe. Some time after, Felix with his wife Drusilla, who was a Jewess, came, probably having just returned to the city after a visit elsewhere, and sent for Paul. It was not a formal hearing, but a private interview, very likely because Drusilla had heard the Christian religion spoken of on so many occasions and wanted to hear this great teacher of that sect tell something about the faith in Christ. This Drusilla was the youngest daughter of Herod Agrippa I, and had been married at the age of fourteen to Azizus, the king of Emesa. Felix became acquainted with her, became enamored of her ravishing beauty, and, with the help of a Jewish sorcerer, named Simon of Cyprus, seduced her from her husband, with whom, according to the account of Josephus, she had led a very unhappy life. So she was now, although married to Felix according to Roman law, yet, according to the Law of God, living with him in an adulterous union. Where the Word of God does not reign, every form of sin and shame is freely indulged in, as the lust of the flesh dictates. Paul willingly complied with the request and, in accordance with the order of the Lord, first exposed the sin and its condemnation. He spoke of righteousness, of the absolute need of purity in the sight of God, of sinlessness before His judgment; he spoke of temperance, of the mastery of self, of the necessity of keeping the lusts and desires of the flesh under proper control; he spoke of the future judgment, when all these matters would be revealed before the eyes of the omniscient God. "He spoke of justice to a judge, of continence to a prefect whose recklessness and licentiousness had made him notorious, and of the future judgment to a man who needed that he should be reminded of his future account." The result was that Felix was filled with fear. "As he glanced back over the stained and guilty past, he was afraid. He had been a slave in the vilest of all positions, at the vilest of all epochs, in the vilest of all cities. He had crept with his brother Pallas into the position of a courtier at the most morally degraded of all courts. He had been an officer of those auxiliaries who were the worst of all troops. What secrets of lust and blood lay hidden in his earlier life we do not know; but ample and indisputable testimony, Jewish and pagan, sacred and secular, reveals to us what he had been — how greedy, how savage, how treacherous, how unjust, how steeped in the blood of private murder and public massacre — during the eight years which he had now spent in the government, first of Samaria, then of Palestine. There were footsteps behind him; he began to feel as though 'the earth were made of glass.'" 90) And it is doubtful whether Drusilla felt more comfortable than her "husband" during the address of Paul. Felix had enough; he told Paul that he might go for the present; at a convenient season he would call him again. But that convenient season apparently never came. That is a favorite phrase of sinners in high and low places to this day: at some later day, after they have thoroughly enjoyed all the lusts which the world has to offer, then they will change their lives. And in the mean time sin takes possession of their hearts so completely that they cannot shake its fetters off; the convenient moment never comes, and they are lost. How little the heart of Felix had been touched by the earnest words of Paul is shown by the fact that he hoped to be given some bribe money from Paul. It was either that the circumstances of Paul had improved since the probable death of his father, or that the procurator believed the Christians would readily collect enough money for their leading teacher in order to relieve him from the disgrace of imprisonment. With this idea in mind, he sent for Paul frequently and conversed with him, very likely dropping a hint now and then as to a method by which he could soon effect his release. But Paul refused to become a party to a crime, and was deaf to all insinuations and suggestions, open and veiled. In this way two years were soon consumed, when Felix was recalled by Nero, about A. D. 59, his successor being Porcius Festus. And the very last act of Felix was an injustice to Paul, for since he desired to gain favor with the Jews for the event of a return to his position, he left Paul in custody at Caesarea. Wherever there are un-

90) Farrar, *Life of Paul*, 550.

scrupulous officials in public or private life, they will be found to be time-servers, always ready to yield favors at the expense of others, and to place their own conduct in the most favorable light. The fact that innocent people may thus be harmed, apparently does not enter into their reckoning. But the government of the exalted Christ goes on in spite of all such miserable subterfuges and tricks.

Summary. *Paul defends himself against the charges of the Jews as preferred before Felix through their attorney Tertullus, and his case is continued indefinitely, he being retained in custody even when Felix is recalled.*

CHAPTER 25.

Paul Appeals to Caesar. Acts 25, 1—12.

The hearing before Festus arranged: V. 1. **Now when Festus was come into the province, after three days he ascended from Caesarea to Jerusalem.** V. 2. **Then the high priest and the chief of the Jews informed him against Paul, and besought him,** v. 3. **and desired favor against him, that he would send for him to Jerusalem, laying wait in the way to kill him.** V. 4. **But Festus answered that Paul should be kept at Caesarea, and that he himself would depart shortly thither.** V. 5. **Let them therefore, said he, which among you are able go down with me and accuse this man, if there be any wickedness in him.** Porcius Festus, the new procurator of Palestine, is spoken of in terms of praise by Josephus, because he succeeded in dispersing the bands of robbers and in putting to death many of the assassins that infested the country. He entered upon the province, upon his duties as governor, in the year 60 A. D., landing at Caesarea and taking possession of the administrative buildings. But very soon, after three days, he made the journey from Caesarea to Jerusalem, which was still the capital of the Jewish nation. Evidently the Jewish leaders had not forgotten their hatred of Paul during the latter's long imprisonment; if anything, they were more vindictive than ever, since their plans had failed of success. For they took this opportunity of informing Festus against Paul, of laying formal and legal information against him as a criminal. The high priest Ananias had been deposed, and Ishmael, the son of Phabi, was acting high priest; but on this occasion all the high priests, past and present, were united, together with the foremost men of the Jewish nation, determined at all costs to put Paul out of the way. They earnestly begged Festus, requesting it as a special favor, that he should send Paul up to Jerusalem, having made an ambush to kill him along the way. Here is a combination of hypocrisy and hatred seldom equaled, rarely even approached. With their murderous designs fully matured and the assassins engaged, they act as though their only concern was a new trial, with both Festus and the chief complainants present in Jerusalem. Now Festus, anxious to gain and keep the favor of the Jews, nevertheless thought it inexpedient to have the prisoner brought to Jerusalem. Paul was then in custody at Caesarea, and his own stay at Jerusalem would be very short, since he intended to leave shortly. Thus, by the providence of God, Festus was obliged to return with speed to Caesarea that the life of Paul might be spared according to His plans. The governor added that those among the Jews that had authority to act, on account of their rank or office, those that were competent to represent the Jews in this matter, should make the journey down to Caesarea with him, and then they might lay their charges against Paul, whether there were really anything criminal in him, whether he were the malefactor which their accusations represented him to be. Note: Instead of speaking of chance and fortune, Christians should substitute the dispensation and government of God, for many matters which seem to us of very minor importance are of the greatest consequence, as the sequel proves.

The beginning of the trial: V. 6. **And when he had tarried among them more than ten days, he went down unto Caesarea; and the next day, sitting on the judgment-seat, commanded Paul to be brought.** V. 7. **And when he was come, the Jews which came down from Jerusalem stood round about, and laid many and grievous complaints against Paul, which they could not prove.** V. 8. **While he answered for himself, Neither against the Law of the Jews, neither against the Temple, nor yet against Caesar have I offended anything at all.** After the interview with the Jews, Festus remained in Jerusalem not more than eight or ten days, busy all the while in trying to get acquainted with the church government and with the various customs and usages of the Jews as they were acknowledged by the Roman government. Having journeyed down to Caesarea after that, he kept his promise to the Jews by setting the trial for the very next day. The narrative implies that the Jews had come down with Festus, and also indicates his promptness. When he had taken the judge's chair, when he had sat down on the tribunal in the judgment-hall, he commanded that Paul be brought before him. When the prisoner had entered and taken the place indicated to him, the Jews that had come down from Jerusalem crowded as near as they dared and stood round about him, their attitude being intended to intimidate him. Since any reference to their own Law and to disputes

concerning their own customs would have been useless, they molded their charges to fit the occasion, bringing forth many and serious complaints. From the answer of Paul it seems that they tried to make his being a Christian a sin against their own Law, his supposed profanation of the Temple a sin against the Holy Place, and the alleged incitement of seditions a sin against Caesar. But all their assertions, with all their show of certainty, did not go for proof before the Roman tribunal, and proof the accusers were unable to bring. As for Paul, the threatening aspect, the dark scowls of the Jews, had no effect on him whatever, for with reference to every charge he was able to defend himself without the slightest difficulty. He maintained that he had committed a crime neither against the Law of the Jews, nor against the Holy Place, nor against the emperor. Thus was truth and right vindicated against falsehood and evil; thus was the trust of Paul in his Lord rewarded with the Lord's protection.

Paul's appeal: V. 9. **But Festus, willing to do the Jews a pleasure, answered Paul and said, Wilt thou go up to Jerusalem, and there be judged of these things before me?** V. 10. **Then said Paul, I stand at Caesar's judgment-seat, where I ought to be judged. To the Jews have I done no wrong, as thou very well knowest.** V. 11. **For if I be an offender, or have committed anything worthy of death, I refuse not to die; but if there be none of these things whereof these accuse me, no man may deliver me unto them. I appeal unto Caesar.** V. 12. **Then Festus, when he had conferred with the council, answered, Hast thou appealed unto Caesar? Unto Caesar shalt thou go.** Evidently the Jews, with the persistence that characterizes them, had not quite given up their project of having Paul brought to Jerusalem. At any rate, the idea that he might gain popularity by the suggestion caused Festus to ask Paul whether he wanted to go up to Jerusalem, there to be tried before him concerning these things. The real favor which Festus intended to show the Jews seems to have consisted in this, that the members of the Sanhedrin would conduct the trial in his presence. It was a most unusual suggestion, altogether at variance with Roman proceedings at law, and seems to have come as a surprise to Paul. But his answer came without hesitation. He wanted to be tried by no Jewish court; standing before the tribunal of Caesar, he was where right and justice demanded that he be tried. The court of the Roman procurator was a lower court, removed but one step from the imperial court, and the governor held court as a representative of Caesar. Paul adds that he had not harmed the Jews, that he had done them no wrong, "as thou also understandest very well," he boldly says. Festus was finding out for himself better with each minute that the charges of the Jews were mere pretense and had no basis of fact. So far as he himself was concerned, Paul was ready to face any just trial. If he was a wrong-doer, guilty of some crime, if he had done anything that merited death according to Roman law, he would not refuse, literally, he would not beg off from, death. But if there were no matters concerning which the Jews accused him, if they were unable to substantiate their charges against him, no man had the right to deliver him up to them, to make them a present of the prisoner, to do with as they chose. And Paul closed his ringing defense of his innocence with the words: I appeal to Caesar. A Roman citizen, tried for a crime and sentenced, had the right to appeal to the emperor if he believed the ruling of the court to be unjust; but in criminal cases he might resort to this appeal at any time, if he thought that the judge was exceeding his authority and acting at variance with the laws. Such an appeal instantly suspended proceedings in the case, its effect being to condemn all magistrates and persons in authority as violators of the public peace who had put to death, tortured, scourged, imprisoned, or condemned any Roman citizen who had appealed to Caesar. In Paul's case, therefore, the trial stopped at once. Festus merely had a short consultation with the assessors of the court, counselors or officials that were consulted in the administration of the law, the question in this instance probably being whether the appeal should be accepted, since Paul had not yet been formally tried. But the outcome of the discussion was stated by Festus: To Caesar hast thou appealed; to Caesar shalt thou go! There seems to be something of a sneer in the words, occasioned, no doubt, by the fact that the appeal at this time indicated the prisoner's mistrust of the judge's impartiality. But this expedient may, incidentally, have proved a relief to Festus; for now the Jews would not be able to say that he had not been willing to grant them their boon, and he was rid of the whole disagreeable matter. Thus the unbelief, the hatred of Christ on the part of the Jews and the injustice on the part of the Roman governor combined in enabling Paul to preach the Gospel also in Rome, the capital of the world. Even to-day the wickedness and enmity of the world often serve to spread the kingdom of Christ on earth.

Agrippa and Bernice in Caesarea.

Acts 25, 13—27.

Festus lays the matter before Agrippa: V. 13. **And after certain days King Agrippa and Bernice came unto Caesarea to salute Festus.** V. 14. **And when they had been there many days, Festus declared Paul's cause unto the king, saying, There is a certain man left in bonds by Felix,** v. 15. **about whom, when I was at Jerusalem, the chief priests and the elders of the Jews informed me, desiring to have judgment**

against him. V. 16. To whom I answered, It is not the manner of the Romans to deliver any man to die before that he which is accused have the accusers face to face, and have license to answer for himself concerning the crime laid against him. V. 17. Therefore, when they were come hither, without any delay on the morrow I sat on the judgment-seat, and commanded the man to be brought forth. V. 18. Against whom, when the accusers stood up, they brought none accusation of such things as I supposed, v. 19. but had certain questions against him of their own superstition, and of one Jesus, which was dead, whom Paul affirmed to be alive. V. 20. And because I doubted of such manner of questions, I asked him whether he would go to Jerusalem, and there be judged of these matters. V. 21. But when Paul had appealed to be reserved unto the hearing of Augustus, I commanded him to be kept till I might send him to Caesar. After a few days had passed, some time after the trial or preliminary hearing which was destined to have such far-reaching consequences, King Agrippa and his sister Bernice came to Caesarea to offer congratulations to Festus upon his entry on his office. Agrippa II was the son of Herod Agrippa I, chap. 12. Since he was only seventeen years old at the time of his father's death, he was not given the kingdom, but was made ruler of Chalcis, a small city and district near the Antilebanon, after the death of his uncle, and also the government of the Temple was given him, with the right of appointing the high priest. Later the tetrarchies of Philip and Lysanias were added to his dominions, and he bore the title of king, though not king of Judea. Bernice, his oldest sister, had been betrothed to Marcus of Alexandria, had then married her uncle, Herod of Chalcis, a few years later, was left a widow, lived with her brother, was again married, to Polemon, king of Cilicia, whom, however, she soon left. The history of her life is that of a wanton woman with only one redeeming feature, when she tried to dissuade the procurator Florus from cutting down the Jews. The two royal visitors had been in the city for some time when Festus laid the case of Paul before the king, feeling sure that the latter's more intimate knowledge of Jewish affairs would enable him to form a correct idea of the situation. So he explained matters as he understood them. A certain man had been left in custody by Felix, concerning whom the Jews had laid information before him when he was in Jerusalem, earnestly requesting a sentence of condemnation against him. The Jews thus appear to have tried other schemes as well as that of having the hearing transferred to Jerusalem. Festus had told the Jews that it was not the custom of the Romans to condemn one man to oblige another, before the accused have his accusers face to face and have a chance to defend himself concerning the accusation which was made against him. And when they had then come together at Caesarea, he had made no delay, he had not put off the matter another day, but on the very next day had taken his seat on the tribunal and commanded the man to be arraigned. But when the accusers stood up in court, they brought no accusation of evil concerning him as Festus had suspected. The bitterness of feeling which the chief priests and members of the Sanhedrin had exhibited in Jerusalem had led the governor to expect the charge of a very serious crime. Instead of that, as the speaker contemptuously remarks, they had certain questions about their own religion against him and concerning a certain Jesus who had died, of whom Paul insisted that he was living. During the court proceedings much must have been said on both sides which Luke did not record, since he was interested only in offering a summary of the history. In several sentences the Roman's skepticism is revealed, as when he refers to the Jewish belief as literally demon-worship, a foolish religion, cp. chap. 17, 22, and when he refers to Paul's earnest statement as a mere assertion. The upshot of the matter had been that Festus had been in doubt, had been at a loss as to the manner of proceeding, of making his inquiry regarding these questions and had therefore asked whether Paul desired to go to Jerusalem and there be tried concerning them. But since Paul had made an appeal that his case be reserved for the decision of Augustus, the Roman emperor, the governor had given command to keep him in custody until he could send him to Caesar, to the highest court in the Roman empire. The report of Festus is fairly correct, though colored by his understanding of the case. But he was evidently still perplexed and counted upon Agrippa, his acquaintance with whom had reached that stage, to help him out with good advice.

Paul presented before Agrippa: **V. 22. Then Agrippa said unto Festus, I would also hear the man myself. To-morrow, said he, thou shalt hear him. V. 23. And on the morrow, when Agrippa was come, and Bernice, with great pomp, and was entered into the place of hearing, with the chief captains and principal men of the city, at Festus' commandment Paul was brought forth. V. 24. And Festus said, King Agrippa, and all men which are here present with us, ye see this man about whom all the multitude of the Jews have dealt with me, both at Jerusalem, and also here, crying that he ought not to live any longer. V. 25. But when I found that he had committed nothing worthy of death, and that he himself hath appealed to Augustus, I have determined to send him. V. 26. Of whom I have no certain thing to write unto my lord. Wherefore I have brought him forth before you, and spe-**

cially before thee, O King Agrippa, that, after examination had, I might have somewhat to write. V. 27. For it seemeth to me unreasonable to send a prisoner, and not withal to signify the crimes laid against him. Agrippa was naturally interested in Paul, the great teacher of Christianity, just as his relative, some thirty years before, had been desirous of seeing Jesus, Luke 23, 8. His family had always held the same relation to Christ and the Gospel. His grandfather had attempted to kill Jesus at Bethlehem in the slaughter of the innocents, his uncle had murdered John the Baptist and mocked Jesus, his father had slain James the apostle and oppressed the Church. Agrippa would probably not have gone one step out of his way to see or hear Paul, but at this unexpected opportunity to become acquainted with the doctrine of the Nazarenes he was truly pleased. So he expressed his wish that he might hear the man himself, with the understanding that he would then be enabled to render a proper opinion; and he received the promise of Festus that this opportunity would be given him the next day. At the appointed time, therefore, Agrippa and Bernice came with great pomp, with an extraordinary, Oriental show of splendor, very likely attired in all their regal finery and attended by a full retinue of servants, all this in the same city in which their father, upon a similar occasion, had been stricken by God and had been eaten by worms. The distinguished visitors were received and conducted, and thus entered into the hall appointed for this informal hearing, hardly the judgment-hall, since a formal trial was out of the question. The brilliancy of the occasion, which was in the nature of a reception, was enhanced by the presence of chiliarchs and of the most distinguished men of the city, surely the most brilliant audience which Paul, whom Festus now ordered to be brought in, had ever faced. Although Agrippa knew the purpose of the assembly, the governor now made a formal speech, addressed to him and to all men that were present, presenting to them the man who was causing all this excitement among the Jews. They saw before them this man, concerning whom the entire multitude of the Jews had had a conference with him, had made complaint to him, both in Jerusalem and in Caesarea. They had loudly voiced their opinion that he should no longer live. But Festus had come to the conclusion that Paul had done nothing worthy of death, and now the prisoner himself had appealed to Caesar, the Roman emperor, to the name that was given divine honor by the Romans. And so Festus had judged that he would send him. It was a solemn, impressive occasion, and the governor made the most of it by stressing its importance and exaggerating his part in the drama. But the difficulty confronting him, as he further explained, one that placed him in a bad predicament, was this, that he had nothing definite to write to his lord, the emperor, concerning Paul. For this reason he had brought him forth before this illustrious assembly and especially before King Agrippa, in order that he might, after some sort of an examination had been held, have something precise to write. For since the charge of treason had been contradicted by Paul with great emphasis, the question still remaining seemed partly obscure and partly absurd. And all this was done since it seemed unreasonable, senseless, to the governor that any one sending a man bound as a prisoner should not indicate, in the accompanying letter, what reasons he had for this step. The situation surely was awkward. He was about to send Paul to Rome, to appear in the emperor's court, though he had not one charge against him; and at the same time he must be sent, since he had appealed to Caesar. Agrippa would therefore probably be able to help him, that he might draw up such letters in the case as not to appear a fool in Nero's eyes. Thus Paul obtained the chance to testify of Christ before this great and magnificent assembly. And thus in many other cases sinners of all classes have the opportunity to hear the Gospel of Jesus Christ, which alone will save their souls. O that every one of them would but hear!

Summary. *Paul, arraigned before Festus, finds it necessary to appeal to Caesar, after which his case is laid before the visiting Agrippa.*

CHAPTER 26.

The Hearing before Agrippa.

Acts 26, 1—32.

Paul's introduction to his speech: V. 1. **Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Thou art permitted to speak for thyself. Then Paul stretched forth the hand and answered for himself:** v. 2. **I think myself happy, King Agrippa, because I shall answer for myself this day before thee touching all the things whereof I am accused of the Jews,** v. 3. **especially because I know thee to be expert in all customs and questions which are among the Jews; wherefore I beseech thee to hear me patiently.** Although Festus was the procurator of the province, yet he courteously yielded to Agrippa, as his guest and as king, the rank of presiding officer. And Agrippa's opening words show that he was just as careful in observing the demands of politeness, for he does not speak in his own name in addressing Paul, but in the third person: It is permitted thee to speak for thyself. Here-

with Paul was given the floor and the privilege to present his case as he saw fit. And Paul, in opening his speech, employed the gesture which is represented in so many ancient statues. Throwing his cloak, or mantle, off his right shoulder, to be held securely by the left hand, he stretched out his right hand in a gesture commanding attention. In his defense he addressed himself first to King Agrippa directly. He considered himself fortunate because of the fact that he was about to make his defense before this king concerning all those things of which he was accused of the Jews. There was no trace of self-consciousness and of fear in the appearance of Paul. "Had he been conscious of guilt, he should have feared being tried in the presence of one who knew all the facts; but this is a mark of a clear conscience, not to shrink from a judge who has an accurate knowledge of the circumstances, but even to rejoice and to call himself happy." (Chrysostomus.) And Paul rejoiced all the more since he knew that Agrippa, having been in charge of the government of the Temple for many years, was well versed regarding all the customs, the usages, as well as the questions, the theoretical discussions which were prevalent among Jews everywhere. Agrippa, like all the Idumeans since the time of Herod the Great, had been brought up in the Jewish faith, and for that reason had been given oversight of religious affairs in Jerusalem, although the city otherwise was under the Roman procurator. For this reason Paul asked the king to listen to him patiently, with all magnanimity. Paul's manner of address was not that of fawning servility, but was the expression of genuine pleasure, due in part probably to the hope of gaining Agrippa for the cause of Christ. The speech of the Christians should at all times be calculated, if not to gain converts for Christ directly, at least not to harm His cause in any way.

Paul's early life and belief: V. 4. **My manner of life from my youth, which was at the first among mine own nation at Jerusalem, know all the Jews;** v. 5. **which knew me from the beginning, if they would testify, that after the most straitest sect of our religion I lived a Pharisee.** V. 6. **And now I stand and am judged for the hope of the promise made of God unto our fathers,** v. 7. **unto which promise our twelve tribes, instantly serving God day and night, hope to come. For which hope's sake, King Agrippa, I am accused of the Jews.** V. 8. **Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you that God should raise the dead?** Early in life, at the beginning of the period of his youth, Paul had come to Jerusalem. And his manner of living, the habits of his life, how he comported himself in every way: all this, since it had taken place from the very beginning of his formal education, from his early youth, in the midst of his nation and in Jerusalem itself, all the Jews knew and were familiar with, for they knew him before and from the beginning. If they would but choose to testify, they might say the truth, that in accordance with the most severe sect, the strictest body of men in their own midst (Paul here includes himself and Agrippa with the Jews), he lived the principles, followed the religious cult, as a Pharisee. The point which the apostle here makes is that he was most unlikely to violate the Jewish feeling, for their customs were inbred and ingrained in him, and according to the strictest interpretation at that. And now, with his whole life before the people like an open book and with his thorough Jewish training as an argument for his orthodoxy, he stood condemned on account of his hope in the promise made by God to the fathers. For that he was on trial in the Roman court, for that he was condemned by the Jews. And yet the twelve tribes of Israel together hoped to gain, to attain to, this same promise by a service in all intentness both by night and by day; regarding which hope he was being accused by Jews, as he emphatically declares to the king. That was to Paul the strangest feature of the whole affair, that Jews could be so blind as to deny their own teaching and belief in the attempt to do him harm. It causes him to cry out: Why is it considered incredible by you that God should raise the dead? Why should they oppose it with all the force of unbelief if God raises the dead? This puzzled question might well be repeated in our days concerning this greatest truth of revealed religion, the fact upon which the Christian religion is based. The opposition of the unbelievers results in their losing the most glorious assurance that may come to man, and we cannot see their reason for such obstinacy.

Paul's earlier position toward Jesus: V. 9. **I verily thought with myself that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth.** V. 10. **Which thing I also did in Jerusalem; and many of the saints did I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I gave my voice against them.** V. 11. **And I punished them oft in every synagog, and compelled them to blaspheme; and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them even unto strange cities.** Paul here makes a frank confession of his enmity toward Christ and His believers, in order to bring out all the more strikingly the grace he had received in his conversion. He himself in those days had been of the opinion, he had held firmly to the conviction; it was an obligation which was the result of his wilful self-delusion that he must do much against, in opposition to, the name of Jesus of Nazareth. The name of Jesus was so hateful to him that he gave himself wholly to the persecution of those that

professed belief in Christianity. In those days his zeal against Christ and the Church had not been one whit behind that of the entire family of Herod: he considered it his most important duty in life to prevent the confession of the name of Jesus, and to enforce this idea with persecution and slaughter. This he did in Jerusalem, being instrumental in shutting up many of the saints in prison, holding authority to that effect from the high priests. Note that Paul here deliberately calls those people saints whom he formerly had persecuted with such unquenchable hatred. And when the believers were put to death, he cast his vote in favor of the execution, either as a member of the Sanhedrin, as some think, or he spoke in favor of the measure, throwing all his persuasive abilities into the balance against the hated name. Neither was his bloodthirstiness satisfied with the executions which he succeeded in bringing about, but in all the synagogs he punished them often, being careful not to overlook a single one, and he forced them to blaspheme, not only to deny and renounce, but even to execrate Christ, in order to save their lives; he made the attempt again and again, and it is only too probable that he had success at least in some cases. His hatred finally drove him to extreme madness, to insanity, so far as the Christians were concerned, the very thought of the extension of the faith drove him wild with fury, and he continued his persecutions of them also into other cities outside of Jerusalem. He had good reasons, therefore, to describe himself as a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious, 1 Tim. 1, 13. His example is that of a man whom the enmity toward Christ will give no rest, neither by day nor by night, who feels compelled to hurt the course of the Gospel by every means at his disposal. Such people Christians must expect to meet in the performance of their duty, and the fact dare not cause them too much anxiety.

Paul's recital of his miraculous conversion: V. 12. **Whereupon, as I went to Damascus with authority and commission from the chief priests,** v. 13. **at midday, O king, I saw in the way a light from heaven, above the brightness of the sun, shining round about me and them which journeyed with me.** V. 14. **And when we were all fallen to the earth, I heard a voice speaking unto me, and saying in the Hebrew tongue, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me? It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks.** V. 15. **And I said, Who art Thou, Lord? And He said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest.** V. 16. **But rise and stand upon thy feet; for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee;** v. 17. **delivering thee from the people and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee,** v. 18. **to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in Me.** Paul here relates the story of his conversion substantially as it has been told by Luke, chap. 9, and by himself in his speech before the Jews, chap. 22. It was on this errand, on this business of enmity against Jesus, that he was traveling to Damascus, being armed with the authority and power of the high priests themselves; he was acting as their commissioner, as their authorized representative, and was given practically free rein to show his hatred in any way he would choose. In the middle of the day, in the clear bright light of full day, he had seen a light from heaven, brighter and more dazzling than the sun that shone round about him and those that traveled with him, that enveloped them all in its blinding brilliance. And when they had all fallen to the ground, Paul first and his companions also after a few moments of dumb and rigid astonishment, he had heard a voice speaking to him in the Hebrew, that is, the Aramaic dialect, asking him why he was persecuting Him, and telling him that it would be hard for him to kick against the goads. In the Orient the ox-goad consisted, as it does to-day, of a long stick, into the end of which a sharp iron point was fixed. Paul was like an unruly ox, kicking when goaded, and thereby adding to his own pains while he persecuted the Church, for the worse his mad enmity became, the less satisfaction did he get out of the gratification of his lust for the blood of Christians. It was a foolish and useless effort for him to try to persecute Jesus in His followers, "an effort which only inflicted deeper wounds upon himself, an effort as idle as that described by the Psalmist, Ps. 2, 3. 4." Upon Paul's anxious and fearful question as to the exact identity of the Lord that was speaking to him, he had received the answer that it was Jesus whom he was persecuting. The Lord had then given him the command to get up and to stand on his feet, since He had appeared to him for this purpose, to select and thus employ him as a man whom the hand of God had torn out of the midst of dangers threatening his soul to be His servant and witness of the things which he had seen, as well as of the things which the Lord still intended to show him. This the Lord had further explained by telling him that He was lifting him out, rescuing him, from the midst of his own people as well as from the Gentiles. And to the latter the Lord was now sending His apostle, to open their eyes, which were blind in spiritual matters, to turn them away from the darkness of their spiritual blindness and unbelief to the light of the Gospel and from the power of Satan, in whose dominion they were kept by nature, to God, their Savior, to receive forgiveness of sins and inheritance in

the midst of those that are sanctified by faith in the Redeemer. Thus the Scriptures in this passage call natural man, so far as spiritual and divine matters are concerned, nothing but darkness.91) The way of salvation, the method by which God leads sinners to His mercy, is here plainly and explicitly taught. Through the preaching of the Gospel the eyes of the sinners are opened that they might know Christ, their Savior; through the Gospel the sinners are converted that they turn away from darkness, from the service of sin, from the power of Satan, to God and to the light and salvation in Christ, so that all heathenism and superstition is left behind, and nothing but the knowledge, worship, and service of the blessed Redeemer engages their attention. Note that the faith which has worked trust in the salvation of Jesus incidentally consecrates the believer, sets him apart, sanctifies him for the service of the Lord.

How Paul had carried out the work of his call: V. 19. **Whereupon, O King Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision;** v. 20. **but showed first unto them of Damascus and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance.** V. 21. **For these causes the Jews caught me in the Temple, and went about to kill me.** V. 22. **Having, therefore, obtained help of God, I continue unto this day, witnessing both to small and great, saying none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come:** v. 23. **that Christ should suffer, and that He should be the first that should rise from the dead, and should show light unto the people and to the Gentiles.** The miraculous vision, as well as the words of Christ in extending to him this call as apostle, had decided Paul; upon the strength of all this he had not been disobedient to the heavenly vision, the Lord's merciful power had wrought the change in his heart, making him willing and eager to become the ambassador of the Most High, of the exalted Christ. He had begun in Damascus, preaching Christ that He is the Son of God, chap. 9, 20. He had spoken boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus in Jerusalem, chap. 9, 29, and throughout all the coasts of Judea. Finally, he had made at least three missionary journeys into the heathen world. And everywhere his message had been the same; it had been the message of the Baptist, it had been the message of Jesus, namely, that men should repent and turn to God. First comes the acknowledgment of sin and of its damnableness; then the sinner despairs of himself and all his own righteousness and turns to God for help and salvation as he hears the glorious news of the Gospel; and then come the works which are worthy of repentance, which measure up to the standard of actual repentance, with nothing of sham or deceit about them, but embodying the sincere effort of the Christian to live worthy of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. For these causes, for the fact that Paul proclaimed the Gospel in all its glorious purity, the Jews had seized him in the Temple and had tried violently to put him to death. All the other points which they had alleged were partly pure fiction and partly perversion of truth, in order to harm the course of the Gospel. The identical thing happens in our days whenever the enemies of Christ invent excuses to suppress the preaching of the truth. But Paul had been fortunate in obtaining help from God, and thus stood firm to that day, bearing witness before the small and the great alike, making no distinction of persons, saying nothing but that which the prophets had, literally, spoken that it was destined to happen, and also Moses. The message of the New Testament does not differ essentially from that of the Old Testament; the believers of the time before Christ had the prophecies of the salvation to come in the Messiah; the believers since His time look back to, and trust in, the salvation as it has been gained by Christ's birth, life, death, and resurrection. What Moses and the prophets preached, the great central doctrine of Christianity, salvation through faith in Jesus, that is the subject of Christian preaching to the end of time: that Christ was to suffer by the will and counsel of God, that He, as the first to rise from the dead, was destined as a light to proclaim the blessings, to bring the message of light to all people, even the heathen, to Jews and Gentiles alike. As usual, Paul insisted upon it that the identity of the Messiah with Jesus of Nazareth was proved not only by His suffering, as foretold, but also by His resurrection, and by the power which the message of this resurrection was exerting in bringing the blessings of spiritual and eternal light to the hearts of men.

Paul's foremost wish: V. 24. **And as he thus spake for himself, Festus said with a loud voice, Paul, thou art beside thyself; much learning doth make thee mad.** V. 25. **But he said, I am not mad, most noble Festus, but speak forth the words of truth and soberness.** V. 26. **For the king knoweth of these things, before whom also I speak freely; for I am persuaded that none of these things are hidden from him; for this thing was not done in a corner.** V. 27. **King Agrippa, believest thou the prophets? I know that thou believest.** V. 28. **Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian.** V. 29. **And Paul said, I would to God that not only thou, but also all that hear me this day were both almost and altogether such as I am, except these bonds.** Paul had spoken in all simplicity and truthfulness, without attempt at oratorical effect, only one of his sen-

91) *Form. Conc.* Mueller, 590.

tences having the force of a rhetorical period. But his seriousness, and the conviction with which he presented his case, could not remain without influence upon his hearers. And almost involuntarily Festus, carried away with the force of the argumentation, interrupted Paul with the exclamation: Thou art beside thyself. The astounding announcements which Paul had made concerning the resurrection of Jesus and of the power of His Word caused the heathen governor to surmise that he must be insane, that he could not be conscious of what he was saying. Festus believed that much wisdom, great learning, had carried the prisoner away to temporary insanity. He may have referred only to the great learning which Paul had just exhibited, or he may have inferred as much from the great number of books which Paul had with him. All this, he believed, had driven the prisoner to madness. But Paul, addressing him as the honorable Festus, Your Excellency, calmly told him that he was not mad, but was uttering words of truth and sobriety. In the judgment of the blind children of this world to this day the faith of the Christians and their calm cheerfulness is considered madness and evidence that they cannot possibly be in their right mind. But they that talk thus have not the faintest idea of what Christianity is, nor of its calm, convincing truth. For the confirmation of this fact Paul called upon King Agrippa, stating that the latter had the proper understanding regarding these things, to whom therefore also Paul had spoken with such cheerful openness. Agrippa knew that Paul's words were sober and sound statements, and that they were based upon facts. A Christian the king was not, but for the truth of history he would surely vouch, and the apostle was fully persuaded that none of these matters were hidden from him, for the entire movement, the establishment of the Christian religion, had not been done in a corner, hidden away from the eyes of the world, but it was a movement of which every one in the entire country might have known and must have heard. Paul argued here as Jesus had done before him, John 18, 21, referring to the fact that the Gospel-message had been proclaimed without the slightest attempt at secrecy. And Paul's boldness, which he had exhibited throughout his address, now also causes him to turn frankly and address himself to King Agrippa with the direct question: Believest thou, King Agrippa, the prophets? I know that thou believest. This question was intended further to substantiate the words of Paul; for even if Festus could not consider his words as statements of truth and soberness, Agrippa could not be indifferent to them, since they were based upon the prophets, and Agrippa, as a Jew, at least nominally accepted the Old Testament books and based his belief upon them. It was a forcible appeal, and one which should have had its effect upon the heart and mind of the king. However, Agrippa would not permit himself to yield, but retorted: With but little persuasion thou wouldst fain make me a Christian? He wanted to indicate whether in irony or in cold indifference, that he could not be made a Christian so easily as all that. He wanted a stronger argument than a mere appeal to his faith to induce him to become a Christian. The sarcastic tone of the answer, however, did not intimidate Paul. With the same cheerful boldness as before he states his honest wish, that he hoped to God, whether by little or by much, not only Agrippa, but all those that heard him that day, might become Christians like himself, without, however, being obliged to wear the disgraceful marks of imprisonment, the fetters which confined him. So the apostle, who preached of love in such touching terms, 1 Cor. 13, could not easily be provoked, and took no account of evil. In the same way all servants of the Lord must be careful to be neither dismayed nor provoked by the veiled and open taunts of the unbelievers, but continue to testify of Christ and issue invitations to all men to accept the message of the Gospel and become Christians.

The end of the hearing: V. 30. **And when he had thus spoken, the king rose up, and the governor, and Bernice, and they that sat with them;** v. 31. **and when they were gone aside, they talked between themselves, saying, This man doeth nothing worthy of death or of bonds.** V. 32. **Then said Agrippa unto Festus, This man might have been set at liberty if he had not appealed unto Caesar.** When Paul had made his last appeal, the king arose, this being the signal that he wished the hearing closed, and the governor, Bernice, and the rest of the invited company that had sat beside them. Having left the hall, they retired to another chamber to exchange their ideas. And they all agreed in saying that this man, Paul, was doing nothing that merited either death or imprisonment. This much the open and fearless speech of Paul at least had shown them. And while Agrippa would not permit himself to be persuaded in favor of Christianity, he at least felt himself obliged to state to Festus that this man might well be released if he had not appealed to Caesar. But the appeal had now been made and accepted, and Paul must be sent to Rome. Very likely this opinion as rendered by Agrippa influenced the letter which Festus addressed to the imperial court in this matter and may thus account for the treatment of Paul upon his arrival at the capital. Note: In all these facts, as here presented, the guiding hand of the exalted Christ, the Head of His Church, is plainly seen: He wanted Paul to get to Rome, but He also protected him against all harm.

Summary. *Paul makes his speech of defense at the hearing before King Agrippa, which moves the latter to declare that he is innocent of any crime, and that only his appeal caused his being sent to Rome.*

CHAPTER 27.

The Voyage from Caesarea to Melita.

Acts 27, 1—44.

From Caesarea to Fair Havens: V. 1. **And when it was determined that we should sail into Italy, they delivered Paul and certain other prisoners unto one named Julius, a centurion of Augustus' band.** V. 2. **And entering into a ship of Adramyttium, we launched, meaning to sail by the coasts of Asia, one Aristarchus, a Macedonian of Thessalonica, being with us.** V. 3. **And the next day we touched at Sidon. And Julius courteously entreated Paul, and gave him liberty to go unto his friends to refresh himself.** V. 4. **And when we had launched from thence, we sailed under Cyprus, because the winds were contrary.** V. 5. **And when we had sailed over the sea of Cilicia and Pamphylia, we came to Myra, a city of Lycia.** V. 6. **And there the centurion found a ship of Alexandria sailing into Italy; and he put us therein.** V. 7. **And when we had sailed slowly many days, and scarce were come over against Cnidus, the wind not suffering us, we sailed under Crete, over against Salmone;** v. 8. **and, hardly passing it, came unto a place which is called The Fair Havens; nigh whereunto was the city of Lasea.** The hearing before Agrippa, which gave him as well as Festus the conviction that Paul was innocent of any offense against the empire, had one good result: it ended the uncertainty of the Caesarean imprisonment. It was determined that the trip to Italy, for which several routes were open, should be made entirely by sea. Luke here, as the text shows, again joined the company of Paul. He had probably spent the intervening two years in gathering the material which was later, under the Holy Spirit's guidance, used in his gospel. Paul and certain other prisoners were committed to the charge of a centurion by the name of Julius, an officer of the imperial guard, or cohort, a body of soldiers that bore the emperor's name and was probably used for confidential business between Rome and the provinces. Since they were in somewhat of a hurry, they did not wait for the coming of a large vessel, but embarked in a ship from Adramyttium, that is, from the port of Adramyttium, a harbor on the coast of Mysia, not far from Troas. This was a coastwise sailboat, engaged in local freight trade, bound for the seaports of Asia Minor. The intention of Julius was to be on the lookout for a larger vessel that was going directly to Italy, an expectation which could hardly fail of fulfilment. Paul not only had Luke as a companion, but also Aristarchus of Thessalonica, one of the men that had come up to Jerusalem with him, chap. 20, 4. The fact that this man later is called a fellow-prisoner of Paul, Col. 4, 10, does not argue that he made the trip with Paul in that capacity. The chances are that Luke would have mentioned the fact of his being a prisoner, had this been his condition at the time. By the next day the boat had made a run along the coast of almost seventy miles and put in at Sidon, the former capital of Phenicia, superseded as the commercial metropolis by Tyre. Here Julius gave the first evidence of the respect and friendly feeling which he showed to Paul on the entire voyage: he treated him kindly, having probably received instructions from Festus to that effect and himself being impressed by the personal character and conduct of Paul. Probably with the soldier to whom he was chained, the apostle received permission to go to his friends in the city, the brethren of the local congregation, and to receive their care. He may not exactly have been in need of medical care, but the kind words of his fellow-Christians at this time were undoubtedly worth more to Paul than any mere entertainment for his benefit. After the business of the master of the vessel had been concluded at this port, they put to sea from there and sailed along below Cyprus, under the lee of this large island in the eastern Mediterranean. This made it necessary for the ship to sail around the long peninsula which juts out toward Syria, instead of cutting straight across the Mediterranean south of the island. But the winds were adverse. Having rounded the northeastern extremity of Cyprus, the ship crept along slowly from point to point along the coast of Cilicia and Pamphylia, "using the local land breezes when possible, and the current constantly running to the westward along the southern coast." In this way they reached the harbor of Myra, on the southern coast of Lycia, one of the great ports in the corn trade between Egypt and Rome. The centurion therefore found here a ship from Alexandria in Egypt, apparently a grain ship bound for Italy, and he transferred his prisoners and their friends to this larger merchant-vessel, put them on board, in the fond belief that the remainder of the voyage could now easily be accomplished. But for quite a number of days they made slow headway, reaching a point off Cnidus, a city on the coast of Caria, only with considerable difficulty, and were unable to enter. The wind still hindering their progress across the Aegean Sea, they turned to the south, to try the course in the lee of the island of Crete, which they reached off Cape Salmone, on the eastern extremity. And even here they sailed along the southern side of the island only with difficulty, until they reached a certain place called Fair Havens, about in the center of the southern coast, the city of Lasea being near it. The start from Caesarea having been made in the late summer or early fall of the year 59 or 60, winter was now approaching, and shipping was becoming dangerous.

The start from Fair Havens: V. 9. **Now when much time was spent, and when sailing was now dangerous, because the fast was now already past, Paul admonished them** v. 10. **and said unto them, Sirs, I perceive that this voyage will be with hurt and much damage, not only of the lading and ship, but also of our lives.** V. 11. **Nevertheless the centurion believed the master and the owner of the ship more than those things which were spoken by Paul.** V. 12. **And because the haven was not commodious to winter in, the more part advised to depart thence also, if by any means they might attain to Phenice, and there to winter, which is an haven of Crete, and lieth toward the southwest and northwest.** V. 13. **And when the south wind blew softly, supposing that they had obtained their purpose, loosing thence, they sailed close by Crete.** Due to the adverse winds and the extremely slow progress, the season was now very far advanced, and navigation had become perilous. The great fast day of the Jewish calendar was even past, that of the Day of Atonement, which was held on the tenth of Tishri (corresponding roughly to our October). In those days, navigation ceased with the coming of the stormy season, not to be resumed till spring. Paul, therefore, whether on his own initiative or by request of the centurion, issued a warning admonition that, so far as he could see, the voyage was destined to proceed only with great injury and much damage, not only of the cargo and of the ship, but also of their own lives. There would surely be injury inflicted to them and the ship by the elements, especially by the violence of the tempest; and the event fully justified Paul's advice. But the centurion was persuaded by the master and by the owner of the ship rather than by anything Paul could say. According to some commentators, the two men were the pilot and the captain of the ship, and their interest in opposing Paul's advice was grounded in mercenary motives, the provisions being eagerly expected in Rome and providing for the keep of a large crew during a long stay at Fair Havens being a considerable item. Then there was another factor, namely, that the harbor was not altogether suitable for wintering, not so much on nautical grounds, but for the reason that there was no large city near by, and that the sailors would suffer for want of suitable occupation. So the majority finally proposed to set sail from there with the intention, if they could make it, of wintering at Phoenix, which was a harbor of Crete fronting toward the southwest and northwest. Their opinion seemed to be sustained by the weather, for instead of the disagreeable and contrary wind from the west a moderate breeze from the south began to blow, which seemed altogether favorable to their intention of running along the coast a matter of some sixty miles. Believing, therefore, that they could carry out their intention, they weighed anchor and sailed along Crete to the west, closer inshore even than before, hugging the coast. It was a perilous undertaking at best, but they were willing to risk it, just as many people to-day will endanger life and limb a thousand times in the hope of gaining a few dollars.

The hurricane: V. 14. **But not long after there arose against it a tempestuous wind, called Euroclydon.** V. 15. **And when the ship was caught, and could not bear up into the wind, we let her drive.** V. 16. **And running under a certain island which is called Clauda, we had much work to come by the boat;** v. 17. **which when they had taken up, they used helps, undergirding the ship; and, fearing lest they should fall into the quicksands, strake sail, and so were driven.** V. 18. **And we, being exceedingly tossed with a tempest, the next day they lightened the ship;** v. 19. **and the third day we cast out with our own hands the tackling of the ship.** V. 20. **And when neither sun nor stars in many days appeared, and no small tempest lay on us, all hope that we should be saved was then taken away.** The gentle breeze seems to have been only a lull while the storm shifted, for not long after they had started from Fair Havens, and probably before they had rounded the cape, where their course would turn toward the northwest, a tempestuous wind, a hurricane, beat down from Crete and its mountains. Its name is given as Euroclydon, or East-northeast, now known as a "Levanter," and its force was such, after the ship had been caught by it, as to make it impossible to face the wind. So the sailors gave way to the wind, they gave the ship up to the mercy of the hurricane and were driven along. Steadily toward the southwest they were beaten until they ran under the lee of a small island called Clauda. Here the force of the storm was not quite so great as out in the open, and so the sailors were enabled to take three precautions. With some difficulty they got hold of the boat, or skiff, which usually floated at the stern, but which was now in danger of being dashed to pieces against the sides of the vessel; this they hoisted to the deck. They next undergirded, or frapped, the ship by passing cables around the hull, undoubtedly the long way in this instance, to secure the whole plankage of the ship and to break the force of the waves. The tightening was done by means of the capstan, thus affording some safety against the parting of the timbers. And finally, since the sailors were afraid that they would be driven into the dreaded Syrtis, the great banks of quicksands near the coast of Africa, they lowered the gear, the rigging of the sails, or set it so that it offered the least possible resistance to the wind, and so were driven. Their precautions seem at least to have had so much effect that the course

of the ship was changed from southwest to west. The next day the tempest raged with unabated vigor, and since they were tossed about and suffered great distress because of the storm, they jettisoned, they threw overboard the cargo, or such parts of it as were loose. On the third day they threw overboard the rigging and the tackling of the ship, including all the spars and cordage. The suffering and distress of all men on board was greatly increased by the fact that they were dependent upon the stars for steering the course of the vessel, and since now neither sun nor stars appeared for many days and the tempest was raging with unabated force, they finally gave up all hope of being saved. That was the result of courting danger without necessity, of pure presumptuousness.

Paul comforts crew and passengers: V. 21. **But after long abstinence Paul stood forth in the midst of them and said, Sirs, ye should have hearkened unto me, and not have loosed from Crete, and to have gained this harm and loss.** V. 22. **And now I exhort you to be of good cheer; for there shall be no loss of any man's life among you, but of the ship.** V. 23. **For there stood by me this night the angel of God, whose I am and whom I serve,** v. 24. **saying, Fear not, Paul; thou must be brought before Caesar; and, lo, God hath given thee all them that sail with thee.** V. 25. **Wherefore, sirs, be of good cheer; for I believe God that it shall be even as it was told me.** V. 26. **Howbeit, we must be cast upon a certain island.** For fourteen days and fourteen nights the vessel was tossed by the waves of the Mediterranean like a nutshell, during which time crew and passengers were in too great distress to think of eating; they abstained entirely. But when Paul, on one of these days, stepped into their midst and stood before them, they were willing to listen with greater respect to one whose judgment had been sounder than that of the great majority, if not of all of them. Without the slightest trace of malice in his attitude, but with the frankness which characterized him at all times, Paul told them that they should have permitted themselves to be persuaded by him and not have sailed from Crete. By not having put to sea, as he had advised, they would not have suffered this loss, they would have saved themselves both distress and injury or loss of property. But now he earnestly admonished them to be of good cheer, since there would be no loss of life in the case of any of them, unless it be of the ship. The ship would, in the events which were yet to transpire, prove a total loss, but all lives would be spared. And this admonition Paul supported by the evidence of a vision or dream. In the night that had just come to a close the angel of the Lord, whose own he was and whom he served, had stood by him and told him not to fear, since it must happen that he would be placed before Caesar, be arraigned before the emperor, and God had granted him the lives of all that were sailing with him. They were his as a present, a gift, from God, with the implication that without such gift they all would have perished. And so Paul again urges the men to be of good cheer, for he had absolute trust in the words of God that things would come to pass in exactly that way which had been told him. And in a spirit of prophecy the apostle adds: On a certain island, however, we are to be stranded. It was not a part of the angel's message to him, but he had this information through the Spirit of God. Note: Every true Christian considers himself as belonging to the Lord, as being His own; and every Christian spends his life in the service of his Lord, even as Paul did. Mark also: God often spares the unbelievers and scoffers for the sake of the Christians, who are then to carry out the work of the Lord with double vigor.

In sight of land: V. 27. **But when the fourteenth night was come, as we were driven up and down in Adria, about midnight the shipmen deemed that they drew near to some country,** v. 28. **and sounded, and found it twenty fathoms; and when they had gone a little further, they sounded again, and found it fifteen fathoms.** V. 29. **Then, fearing lest we should have fallen upon rocks, they cast four anchors out of the stern and wished for the day.** V. 30. **And as the shipmen were about to flee out of the ship, when they had let down the boat into the sea, under color as though they would have cast anchors out of the foreship,** v. 31. **Paul said to the centurion and to the soldiers, Except these abide in the ship, ye cannot be saved.** V. 32. **Then the soldiers cut off the ropes of the boat, and let her fall off.** About this time the ship, a mere plaything of the waves, was being tossed about in the Adria, in the Ionian Sea between Sicily and Greece, being driven in a uniform, continuous motion toward the west, and the fourteenth night had descended upon them. It was about in the middle of the night when the sailors surmised, not because they were able to distinguish anything in the dense darkness, but because the sound of the waves, the rolling of the breakers, seemed to indicate as much, that some land was approaching them, just as it appears to a traveler from the deck of a ship. So they quickly took soundings and found the depth to be twenty fathoms (a fathom, six feet); however, after they had traversed but a little more space and had again cast out the sounding-lead, they measured fifteen fathoms. The conclusion which they drew from these soundings made the crew fear, together with the passengers, that they would be cast on rocky ground, either on the shore or on submerged reefs. So they let down four anchors from the stern of the ship and heartily wished that day would dawn. Anchorage from the stern in this

case, not knowing what was a score of feet away from them, enabled the sailors to manage the ship far more easily and would keep her under the control of the helm, in case it would prove feasible to run her ashore in the morning. Paul was on deck, as were most of the passengers, and so he was enabled to thwart a treacherous plan of the crew. For the sailors desired earnestly to flee from the ship, to escape and leave soldiers, passengers, and prisoners to their fate; they lowered the small boat into the sea with the plea that they wanted to let down anchors from the bow, or prow, of the ship as well. They pretended that they must take the anchors the full cable length away. But Paul, noticing their deception, told the centurion and the soldiers that, unless these men remained in the ship, they all could not be saved. The soldiers thereupon made short work of the matter. They simply chopped off the ropes that held the boat and let her fall down, the waves at once carrying the skiff away. Thus Paul again saved the lives of all the people on the ship, for it stood to reason that neither the soldiers nor the passengers would be able to handle the vessel in an emergency like the present one. A Christian will at all times have the welfare of all men at heart and, so far as lies in his power, will advise, help, and protect them in every bodily need.

Paul again encourages his shipmates: V. 33. **And while the day was coming on, Paul besought them all to take meat, saying, This day is the fourteenth day that ye have tarried and continued fasting, having taken nothing.** V. 34. **Wherefore I pray you to take some meat, for this is for your health; for there shall not an hair fall from the head of any of you.** V. 35. **And when he had thus spoken, he took bread, and gave thanks to God in presence of them all; and when he had broken it, he began to eat.** V. 36. **Then were they all of good cheer, and they also took some meat.** V. 37. **And we were in all in the ship two hundred three score and sixteen souls.** V. 38. **And when they had eaten enough, they lightened the ship, and cast out the wheat into the sea.** That the events of the last two weeks, the terrible buffeting by wind and waves, the constant danger of death, the absence of sun and stars, had had a demoralizing effect upon all men on board, is easily understood. In spite of Paul's cheering and reassuring words when the storm was at its height, the strain had not permitted either crew or passengers to eat. The man with the greatest calmness and self-possession on the entire vessel was the apostle; he was now easily the leading spirit in the whole ship's company. Since about midnight the ship had been straining at her anchors, in constant danger that some unusually heavy sea might cause the cables to part and throw them all on the rocky reefs. And now, finally, came the late dawn of a lowering November day. But just as day was about to break, Paul earnestly urged all men on board to take some food, reminding them that it was now the fourteenth day since they had been on the watch, on the lookout for help and deliverance, during all of which time they had been without food and had eaten nothing, had taken no regular meal. Now and then one of them might have snatched a hasty bite, but not enough to keep up sufficient strength for any emergency. "Paul suggests to the whole company to take food, in order to strengthen themselves for the escape from the ship. This was a wise and necessary act. It was forced on Paul by the situation; yet he was the only one that preserved sufficient coolness and courage to think of preparing for the immediate future." 92) Paul thus begged them to take some food and to make a good square meal of it, since this was necessary for their safety and for the work which they would have to perform to obtain deliverance from their present peril. And he again assures them that not a hair of their heads would perish; they would neither lose their lives nor suffer any serious hurt in their bodies. After these words Paul himself set a good example: he took some bread, gave thanks to God before them all, and, breaking the bread, began to eat. Note that Paul, even in the time of greatest peril, did not neglect to say grace and thank God, who had provided the food; nor did the presence of heathen hinder him from following his usual custom in this respect. The courage of Paul was infectious, for now the entire company was of good cheer; all men on board felt the need of showing more trust and manliness, and so they also themselves took some meat, partook of food, a large number, as Luke notes, a total of two hundred and seventy-six souls: they all were inspired by his confidence. When they had then eaten to their satisfaction, every one making a full meal of it, this restored them to such calmness and strength that they afterwards lightened the ship by throwing the grain, which seems to have made up a large part of her cargo, into the sea. The purpose was to have the vessel ride as high as possible in the water, thus diminishing her draught sufficiently to lift her over banks and shoals and to bring her as near to the land as possible. Note: It is always to the advantage and profit of the children of this world that Christians live in their midst. More than once, in days of great danger and distress, the advice and the prayers of the Christians have brought help.

The escape from the ship: V. 39. **And when it was day, they knew not the land; but they discovered a certain creek with a shore, into the which they were minded, if it were possible, to thrust in the ship.** V. 40. **And when they had taken up the**

92) Ramsay, *The Bearing of Recent Discovery*, 312.

anchors; they committed themselves unto the sea, and loosed the rudder-bands, and hoised up the mainsail to the wind, and made toward shore. V. 41. And falling into a place where two seas met, they ran the ship aground; and the forepart stuck fast, and remained unmovable, but the hinder part was broken with the violence of the waves. V. 42. And the soldiers' counsel was to kill the prisoners, lest any of them should swim out and escape. V. 43. But the centurion, willing to save Paul, kept them from their purpose, and commanded that they which could swim should cast themselves first into the sea, and get to land, v. 44. and the rest, some on boards, and some on broken pieces of the ship. And so it came to pass that they escaped all safe to land. When it was day, when it became light enough to distinguish objects plainly, the sailors tried to get their bearings, but they did not recognize the land. They may have been at the island before, but this particular section on the northeastern shore was not familiar to them. From where they were anchored, near a rocky point, they perceived, or noticed, a small bay or inlet with a sandy beach, which looked much more inviting than the reefs farther out. Into this small bay, therefore, they wished, if possible, to drive the ship; they wanted to run her ashore on the beach. Having therefore loosed the anchors by slipping the cables which held them inside the vessel, they left them, they abandoned them in the sea. At the same time they unlashed the bands, the fastening of the rudders, of the two paddle-rudders with which the ships of those days were supplied, for they now needed them to steer the ship. And finally, they hoisted the foresail, spread its full extent to the breeze, and made for the flat beach. But as the vessel entered into the channel, it suddenly struck a submerged bank, ridge, shoal, or reef, the bow cutting deeply into the mud or sand and jamming fast, while the stern began to break up from the force of the waves. It was an extremely dangerous situation and one which almost caused the soldiers to lose their self-control and common sense. For their plan now was to kill the prisoners, lest any of them escape by swimming. Just as though there had been much danger of that in the rocky island! But here Julius, the centurion, again showed his good will. He wanted to bring Paul through safely, and therefore hindered them in their plan, put a stop to their intention. He gave the command that all those that were able to swim should jump overboard first and thus reach the land. And afterwards, when the sea about the hulk was clear of the swimmers, the rest, some on planks and some on pieces of wreckage, were to do the same thing. It was no easy task, with a heavy sea rolling and the waves sweeping high up on the shore, to reach a place beyond danger; but finally all the men that had been on the vessel, crew, soldiers, passengers, prisoners, came through in safety, according to the prediction of Paul. It was a miraculous escape. If only they had all acknowledged that it was due to the God of the Christians to whom they owed life and all blessings!

Summary. *The voyage to Rome is begun at Caesarea in an Adramyttine ship, continued at Myra on an Alexandrine vessel, through the southern Aegean Sea and along the south side of Crete, where a terrible storm overtakes the ship and drives it westward to be wrecked on the island of Melita.*

CHAPTER 28.

The Journey from Melita to Rome.

Acts 28, 1—16.

Paul again in peril: **V. 1. And when they were escaped, then they knew that the island was called Melita. V. 2. And the barbarous people showed us no little kindness; for they kindled a fire, and received us, every one, because of the present rain and because of the cold. V. 3. And when Paul had gathered a bundle of sticks, and laid them on the fire, there came a viper out of the heat, and fastened on his hand. V. 4. And when the barbarians saw the venomous beast hang on his hand, they said among themselves, No doubt this man is a murderer, whom, though he hath escaped the sea, yet vengeance suffereth not to live. V. 5. And he shook off the beast into the fire, and felt no harm. V. 6. Howbeit, they looked when he should have swollen, or fallen down dead suddenly; but after they had looked a great while and saw no harm come to him, they changed their minds, and said that he was a god.** When the people on the wrecked vessel had reached the land in safety, then only did they find out that Melita, or Malta, was the island's name. They had therefore, in the two weeks, been driven a matter of almost five hundred miles; for the island is due south of Sicily, forming, with Gozo and several other smaller island, a group now known as the Maltese Islands. Luke calls the islanders barbarians, not as a term of reproach, but because that was the name given to all foreigners, to all such as did not speak Greek, by the Greeks and Romans. The people of the island were of Phenician descent and had come under the dominion of Rome after the Second Punic War. They here proved themselves hospitable in an unusual degree; they showed the shipwrecked company extraordinary kindness. It must have

been with some difficulty that they kindled a fire and received them all, gave them a warm welcome, which no doubt was rendered doubly so because they were all cold and wet to the skin; besides, there was a continued driving rain, and the cold chilled to the bone. Paul by no means stood back when the others were all engaged in replenishing the fire, but cheerfully gathered fagots with the rest of them. When, however, he was just heaping up a bundle of sticks and then laying them on the fire, a serpent, awakened by the warmth, glided out through the sticks, and, before Paul could withdraw his hand, bit him, and held fast to the wound. When the islanders saw the creature suspended from his hand thus, they were greatly shocked and expressed their opinion of the matter by saying that certainly this man must be a murderer, whom Justice had not permitted to live, though he had been saved from the sea. They knew that Paul was a prisoner because he was under guard, and their conclusion was as rash as that of most people under like circumstances. From experience they knew the virulence of the poison of these serpents, and in their eyes Paul was already dead; the goddess of justice, in whom they believed, had taken vengeance upon him. But Paul shook off the viper into the fire by a jerking movement of his hand and suffered no evil, no disagreeable consequences, of any kind. But the islanders watched him, sure that he was destined to swell up or to drop down dead suddenly. But neither of these effects took place, Luke, as a physician, being fully acquainted with such symptoms. And when they had waited a long time and watched, and yet nothing unusual happened, then the inhabitants changed their minds and said that he was a god. Their superstitious minds could reach no other conclusion; it was the way which their training had taught them to follow. Note: Modern people may want to smile deprecatingly over this show of superstition, but with almost the entire world guilty of similar beliefs in one form or another, there certainly is no room for casting stones upon others. It was the Lord that had held His sheltering hand over His servant, according to His promise, Mark 16, 18.

The healing of the father of Publius: V. 7. **In the same quarters were possessions of the chief man of the island, whose name was Publius; who received us, and lodged us three days courteously.** V. 8. **And it came to pass that the father of Publius lay sick of a fever and of a bloody flux; to whom Paul entered in, and prayed, and laid his hands on him, and healed him.** V. 9. **So when this was done, others also which had diseases in the island came and were healed;** v. 10. **who also honored us with many honors, and when we departed, they laded us with such things as were necessary.** In the same quarters, in the neighborhood of the place which is now known as St. Paul's Bay, the Roman ruler of the island, whose title was the chief, or first man, as an ancient inscription also shows, had his estate. His name was Publius, and he showed an almost unexampled hospitality to the shipwrecked people, one well worthy of the legate of the praetor of Sicily, to whose province Malta belonged. For he welcomed and extended his hospitality at least to the passengers and to Paul, if not to the entire ship's company, his buildings being commodious enough to make such an arrangement possible. He did this three days with the greatest courtesy and benevolence, until other means could be found. It so happened that the father of Publius was down sick, lying abed, with fevers and dysentery, as Luke, with his medical knowledge, was able to determine, and Paul, in return for the hospitality received, went in to him, prayed over him in the name of Jesus, laid his hands upon him, and made him well, healed him, gave him back his health. As in other cases, this miracle was done for the sake of glorifying Christ, of testifying to the power of the Gospel. The result was that the rest of the inhabitants of the island that had sicknesses came to Paul and were cured. It was a time of merciful visitation to the island, by which the Lord revealed Himself to many of them. The gratitude of the islanders was correspondingly great. For Paul's sake they honored them with many honors, not pressing upon them a physician's fees, as some have supposed, but giving them all that honored guests should enjoy in the matter of presents and entertainment; and when they sailed, they put on board, for the use of Paul and the entire ship's company, all the supplies and comforts needed for the remainder of the voyage. Thus God controls even the so-called chance happenings of life, and directs them to the welfare of the believers and others among whom they live. Note: It was altogether proper and laudable for the inhabitants of the island to show their gratitude for the merciful visitation of God to His servants. If this pleasant relation were everywhere established, there would be less working under the handicap of groaning in the Church, Heb. 13, 17.

From Melita to Rome: V. 11. **And after three months we departed in a ship of Alexandria, which had wintered in the isle, whose sign was Castor and Pollux.** V. 12. **And landing at Syracuse, we tarried there three days.** V. 13. **And from thence we fetched a compass and came to Rhegium; and after one day the south wind blew, and we came the next day to Puteoli;** v. 14. **where we found brethren, and were desired to tarry with them seven days; and so we went toward Rome.** V. 15. **And from thence, when the brethren heard of us, they came to meet us as far as Appii Forum and The Three Taverns; whom**

when Paul saw, he thanked God and took courage. V. 16. **And when we came to Rome, the centurion delivered the prisoners to the captain of the guard; but Paul was suffered to dwell by himself with a soldier that kept him.** The stay at Melita was made as short as possible, since Julius was anxious to deliver his prisoners to the imperial court. After three months, or at the very latest at the end of February or the beginning of March, they all sailed in a ship from Alexandria which had wintered in the island, whose distinguishing mark, or sign, either on the figurehead at the prow or on the pennant, was the Twin Brothers, Castor and Pollux. These two heathen gods were considered the special protectors of sailors, and ships were often ornamented with their carved figures. Sailing almost due north, they put in at Syracuse, a city on the eastern coast of Sicily, where they remained for three days, probably waiting for favorable winds. When they had cast off here, the wind was still from the wrong quarter, and they were obliged to work up along the coast by tacking, and thus reached Rhegium, in the southwestern corner of Italy, on the Strait of Messina. Here they were more fortunate, for after a stay of only one day a steady south wind arose, enabling them in two days to come to Puteoli. Here the vessel ended her voyage, and Paul and his fellow-prisoners disembarked. The city was one of the leading ports of Italy in those days, its relation to Rome being about that of Liverpool to London. Here Paul and his companions looked up and found brethren, Christians forming a congregation, and were begged by them to remain for seven days before going on to the capital, some hundred and forty miles distant. That Paul received the permission from Julius to accede to the urgent request of the local Christians shows that he was held in high respect by the Roman. Thus they here, in Puteoli, reached the boundaries of the territory of Rome, for Luke carefully distinguishes between the city proper and the wider territory which was commonly reckoned with it.[93] News of Paul's coming had meanwhile traveled ahead to the city, where the brethren were awaiting the coming of their great teacher with eager interest. Some of the disciples of Rome went down to meet them, as far as Appii Forum, a village on the Appian Way, forty-three miles from Rome; and ten miles nearer to the capital, at Three Taverns, there was another delegation of Christians awaiting the apostle. Though the two little towns, therefore, were of no importance otherwise, and one of them, at least, was noted for its road-houses, their names have been preserved in sacred history as halting-places of Paul's company. This indication of respect and affection on the part of the Roman brethren filled Paul with great joy and comforted his heart, for when he saw them, he gave thanks to God and took courage. It is both elevating and strengthening to the faith when Christians on their journey through life find everywhere brethren that with them serve the true God of heaven. When Julius and his band of prisoners reached Rome, he delivered Paul to the proper officers, or to the prefect of the emperor's guard. And the centurion's report as well as the letter of Festus must have been very favorable; for Paul, while waiting for his case to be called and during the course of his trial, was given permission to remain in his own lodgings, having only a soldier with him as a guard. He was bound to this soldier by a light chain, a fact which may have been irksome at times, but it was almost the lightest form of imprisonment known to the Romans and gave the apostle the free opportunity to see the brethren and hold all the services that he chose to have. The exalted Christ Himself held His protecting hand over Paul, in order that the congregation at Rome might receive the benefit of Paul's teaching and be established in the Christian doctrine.

Two Years at Rome. Acts 28, 17—31.

Paul calls the Jews together: V. 17. **And it came to pass that after three days Paul called the chief of the Jews together; and when they were come together, he said unto them, Men and brethren, though I have committed nothing against the people or customs of our fathers, yet was I delivered prisoner from Jerusalem into the hands of the Romans,** v. 18. **who, when they had examined me, would have let me go, because there was no cause of death in me.** V. 19. **But when the Jews spake against it, I was constrained to appeal unto Caesar; not that I had aught to accuse my nation of.** V. 20. **For this cause, therefore, have I called for you, to see you and to speak with you, because that for the hope of Israel I am bound with this chain.** There was a flourishing congregation in Rome at this time, and Paul could well have devoted his entire time to the believers already gathered. But, as in other places, he here deliberately called the most influential Jews together, still adhering to his rule: to the Jew first and also to the Greek, Rom. 1, 16. The decree of Claudius banishing the Jews from Rome, chap. 18, 2, had meanwhile been recalled, and the Jews had again flocked to the capital. When the leading Jews responded to his invitation and met in the place designated by Paul, he laid some matters of a personal nature before them. He wanted, above all, to remove any prejudices that they might entertain with respect to him, first, on account of his imprisonment; secondly, on account of the fact that he had appealed to the emperor; thirdly, to remove any effects of slanderous reports which

93) Ramsay, *The Bearing of Recent Discovery*, 44; *St. Paul the Traveler*, 347.

may possibly have been brought from Jerusalem. He told them that he had done nothing, was not guilty of any offense either against the people of the Jews or against the customs and usages of the fathers, and yet had been delivered into the hands of the Romans. Paul tactfully refers to his arrest as being occasioned only indirectly by the Jews. When the Romans had given him a hearing, they had wanted to release him, since they found no cause of death in him, not a single crime having been proved against the apostle. But when the Jews then objected, he had been obliged to appeal to Caesar, but not in the sense, as Paul hastens to add, as though he had any accusation to bring against his own people. But it was for this reason that he had called for them, had asked them to meet with him, in order that he might see them and speak to them, have a conference with them. For he assures them that he is wearing this chain, which they all could see, he was surrounded with this evidence of imprisonment, on account of the hope of Israel. The one hope of Israel was that concerning the Messiah; to Him all the prophets looked forward, of Him all the sages had spoken. And it was because Paul preached of the fulfilment of all these hopes and predictions and prophecies in the person of Jesus Christ of Nazareth that the enmity had struck him which resulted in his arrest.

Paul testifies of the kingdom of God: V. 21. **And they said unto him, We neither received letters out of Judea concerning thee, neither any of the brethren that came showed or spake any harm of thee.** V. 22. **But we desire to hear of thee what thou thinkest; for as concerning this sect, we know that everywhere it is spoken against.** V. 23. **And when they had appointed him a day, there came many to him into his lodging; to whom he expounded and testified the kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus, both out of the Law of Moses and out of the prophets from morning till evening.** V. 24. **And some believed the things which were spoken, and some believed not.** When Paul had made his appeal for a square deal at their hands, the Jews frankly told him that they had received neither any written nor verbal communications which were unfavorable to him personally; letters they had not received from Judea, and none of the brethren that had come to Rome during the last years had reported anything bad against him. But they thought it good and proper to hear from Paul himself what he thought, to get his ideas on the whole situation, for so far as this new sect was concerned, it was known to them that it was finding contradiction and opposition everywhere. The report had been spread that the Christians were an atheistical and wicked sect, to be detested and abhorred by all mankind. But with the idea of being fair and of hearing Paul's story in his own way, the leading Jews of Rome fixed a date on which they would come to his place of lodging in larger numbers. To all of them Paul explained and expounded, not so much in vindication of his own conduct as in testimony for Christ, the kingdom of God, showing them what the term meant, in what manner they might enter into this wonderful kingdom, what faith was, always placing into the center of his persuasive discourse Jesus the Savior. From morning till night he tried his best to convince them concerning Jesus, from the Law of Moses, from the historical books of the Old Testament, from the books of the prophets, proving by a comparison with the life of Jesus that He must be the promised Messiah. It was a day of blessings from the Lord, of His merciful call to all those that were present. But the result was the usual one under similar circumstances. Some were convinced by what Paul said, but others were obstinate and refused to believe. No matter how emphatic and overpowering the evidence, some people will persist in hardening their hearts against the gracious influence of the Gospel and thus in spurning the grace of God which is offered to them.

A word from Isaiah applied: V. 25. **And when they agreed not among themselves, they departed after that Paul had spoken one word, Well spake the Holy Ghost by Esaias the prophet unto our fathers,** v. 26. **saying, Go unto this people and say, Hearing ye shall hear and shall not understand, and seeing ye shall see and not perceive;** v. 27. **for the heart of this people is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed, lest they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them.** V. 28. **Be it known, therefore, unto you that the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles, and that they will hear it.** V. 29. **And when he had said these words, the Jews departed, and had great reasoning among themselves.** It was at this point in the discussion, when some were being persuaded by Paul's words, yielding to the conviction of God's Word, and others continued in their disbelief, and when they could not come to an agreement among themselves, that Paul reminded them of a word of the Prophet Isaiah, chap. 6, 9. 10, which caused the meeting to disperse without a definite conclusion in regard to the matter. He referred to the prophecy concerning self-harden ing followed by hardening on the part of God. Isaiah had received the express command to go to the Jews of his day and tell them that they would, literally, hear with their hearing, and yet not understand; that they would see with their eyes upon the Word, and yet receive no impression on their mind. And the reason for that judgment was that the heart of the people

had become callous, unfeeling, and the spiritual hearing of their ears had become difficult, and their eyes were prevented from seeing. Therefore the Lord had given them up to the hardness of their hearts, lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and turn, be converted, and the Lord heal them. This terrible judgment upon the stubborn Jews had begun in the time of Isaiah, it had been threatened in the days of the Savior, Matt. 13, 14. 15; Mark 4, 12; Luke 8, 10, and it was now about to be carried out in its final terrible curse. And they would have no one to blame for the terrible results of their enmity toward Christ and God but themselves. Formally and solemnly Paul announces to the assembled Jews this consequence of their resistance and the course which he would be compelled to adopt henceforth. He wanted to have it known, to be understood by them, that the salvation of God, in the Gospel of the Messiah, was now sent to the Gentiles, and they would hear and accept its glorious news. Note that even these last words are spoken not merely to condemn, but also to lead to repentance. It was like showing to the Jews the horrible yawning abyss at whose edge they were standing, having deliberately closed their eyes and ears against every warning. And some results seem to have attended this last warning, if the text here is correct, for when Paul said these words, they left his quarters, discussing the matter among themselves with great vehemence. If the interest thus aroused only leads to a careful searching of Scriptures, a person may feel well rewarded for even such apparently fruitless discussions.

Two years at Rome: V. 30. **And Paul dwelt two whole years in his own hired house, and received all that came in unto him,** v. 31. **preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ with all confidence, no man forbidding him.** Paul may, at this time, have been able to purchase many conveniences for himself, or the liberality of the various congregations made it possible; at any rate, he was able to rent and live in his own lodgings for two whole years, this probably being the length of time required for his case to come up to trial and be disposed of. And he certainly was not hard to find or difficult to get to, for he received all that came to him; no matter from what congregation the brethren came, they were always welcome. He was still in custody, Phil. 1, 13. 17, but it certainly was of the very lightest kind. And just at this time God opened a door for His Word. For Paul spent his entire time in proclaiming the kingdom of God, not only by spoken words, but also in letters, for we have from this time of his life the epistles to the Ephesians, to the Colossians, to the Philippians, and to Philemon. In inviting men to become members of the kingdom of God, of the wonderful communion of saints, Paul always taught and repeated without rest or weariness the message concerning the Lord Jesus. With all confidence, with all open cheerfulness he preached; his sermons and private discussions were all redolent with the oil of the same bold joy with which the Lord had anointed him. And by the mercy of God he could do this unmolested, without hindrance. This must have been a great comfort to him and greatly increased his willingness and the enjoyment of his work for the Lord. The entire story shows how the Gospel of Christ gains its victories. For the same Gospel which Paul proclaimed in the capital of the world has since taken its course through the countries and is preached among the Gentiles to this day. The Church, which is established upon Jesus, the Rock of Ages, is standing today, and will stand to the end of time, and the portals of hell will not prevail against it.

Summary. *The journey from Melita to Rome is completed without mishap, and Paul takes the opportunity in the capital to speak to the Jews and afterward to many others, preaching to them the kingdom of God and their Savior Jesus Christ.*

A SUMMARY OF THE LATTER PART OF PAUL'S LIFE.

Giving a fairly exact chronological summary of the last part of Paul's life is attended with some difficulties, as the many varying lists, especially those given by Meyer, indicate. Even the most careful study cannot claim absolute exactness, mainly because the Biblical account permits of so wide a latitude. The list here offered is therefore intended merely as an aid in orientation and may, in this respect, claim as much historical accuracy as any other list.

Conversion of Paul. 32 or 33 A. D.

First visit to Jerusalem after conversion. 35 or 36 A. D. Gal. 1, 18.

Beginning of first missionary journey. 46 A. D.

Return to Antioch. About August, 48 A. D.

Second trip to Jerusalem and resolutions concerning Judaistic teaching. 49 A. D. Gal. 2, 1.

Beginning of second missionary journey; Syria and Cilicia. Autumn, 49 A. D.

Derbe, Lystra, Iconium, Antioch. Winter, 49—50 A. D.

Troas, Philippi. Spring, 50 A. D.

Thessalonica and Berea. Summer, 50 A. D.

Athens and Corinth. Early autumn, 50 A. D.

Rising of Jews. — Gallio. Late summer, 51 A. D.

Jerusalem and Antioch. Spring and early summer, 52 A. D.

Beginning of third journey. Syria, Cilicia, Galatia. 52—53 A. D.

In Ephesus. Summer, 53 A. D. to June, 56 A. D.

Macedonia and Illyricum. Summer and autumn, 56 A. D.

In Corinth. End of 57 A. D. and beginning of 58 A. D.

Jerusalem. Pentecost, 58 A. D.
Prisoner at Caesarea. June, 58 A. D. to June, 60 A. D.
Voyage to Rome. August, 60 A. D. to February or March, 61 A. D.
Prisoner in Rome. Spring, 61 A. D. to spring, 63 A. D.
Later journeys. 63—66 A. D.
Second arrest. 66 A. D. or 67 A. D.
Execution. 67 A. D. or 68 A. D.[94]

94) Cp. *Syn. Ber.*, Oestl. Distr., 1907—1913; North Dakota und Montana, 1910 and 1912; Minnesota, 1913.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF ENGLISH BIBLE TRANSLATIONS.

I.

Vernacular Versions of Parts of the Bible in England before Wyclif.

It is usually stated that there were no vernacular Bible versions in Germany before Luther, and that assertion is, in a manner of speaking, correct. The statement has also been made that there were no Bible versions in the vernacular in England before Wyclif, and that may also be defended. But just as Germany had the *Heliand*, a translation of Tatian's *Harmony of the Gospels*, Otfried's *Evangelienbuch*, the Monsee-Vienna *Fragments*, some interlinear Psalters, and last, but not least, the fourteenth-century version made from the *Vulgate*, which was published either in 1462 or 1466, and before 1518 had fourteen High German and four Low German editions,[95] thus England, too, had a great many versions of parts of the Bible in the various dialects, especially the Wessex, the Middlesex, the Kentish, and the Northumbrian, which have well repaid the study that has recently been made of them.[96]

Although the ecclesiastical history of England goes back to the third century, very little is known of the period before the Anglo-Saxon invasion. With the conversion of Ethelbert of Kent at the time of Gregory the Great, the real history of the Christian Church in England begins, as depicted so vividly by the Venerable Bede. It is he that gives us the account of the poet Caedmon in the seventh century, of whom he writes, as Alfred has it in his translation: "Song he aerest be middengeardes gesceape, ond bi fruman moncynnes, ond eal thaet staer Genesis, thaet is seo aereste Moyses booc; one eft bi utgonge Israhela folces of Aegypta londe, ond bi ingonge thaes gehatlandes; ond bi odrum monegum spellum thaes halgan gewrites canones boca; ond bi Cristes mennicnesse, ond bi his throwunge, ond bi his upastignisse in heofonas; ond bi thaes Halgan Gastes cyme, ond thara apostola lara." [97] In the next century, Cynewulf made similar poetical transcriptions of Bible stories: Crist, Doomsday, the Harrowing of Hell, and others. To the same school, although of a later date, belong the paraphrases which are most widely known: Genesis, Exodus, Daniel, Temptation of Christ, and others.[98]

The first prose version of any part of the Bible originated in all probability in the eighth century, when the Venerable Bede, the eminent scholar, historian, and churchman, translated the Gospel according to St. John into the vernacular. It represented the culmination of his life work, but no part of his rendering is extant. We have parts of an Anglo-Saxon version of this Gospel, however, which may go back to the end of this century. The rendering is remarkably exact and clear, as the following verses show: "On fruman waes Word, and thaet Word waes mid Gode, and God waes thaet Word. Thaet waes on fruman mid Gode. And thaet Word waes flaesc geworden, and eardode on us, and we gesawon hys wuldor, swylce ancennedes wuldor of Faeder, thaet waes ful mid gyfe and sodfaestnysse," John 1, 1. 2. 14.[99]

In the ninth century, the interlinear Psalters appear, that is, interlinear glosses of the Book of Psalms. Of these renderings eleven manuscripts are known to exist, and they appear under various names: *Aldhelm's Paris Psalter*, *Altmerc's Psalter*, the *Mercian Psalter*, and others. "Not less than three Latin versions of the Psalter were current in the Middle Ages, *viz.*, *Psalterium Romanum*, *Psalterium Gallicanum*, and *Psalterium juxta Hebraeos*. They were all due to the efforts of Jerome. In 383 he made a cursory revision of the Old Latin Psalter from the Septuagint. Pope Damasus at once ordered this revision to be introduced into the Roman Liturgy; it was henceforth known as the Roman Psalter, and is still in use at St. Peter's in Rome. Soon after retiring to Palestine in 387, Jerome found at Caesarea a copy of the *Hexapla* of Origen, which had belonged to the learned bishop Pamphilus, and from which he made a careful revision of the Psalter. This new text soon found its way into the churches of Gaul, whence it derived its name 'Gallican'; it is still retained in the *Roman Breviary* and in the *Vulgate*, and forms the basis of the English Prayer-Book version of the Psalms. At the age of forty-five Jerome began to learn Hebrew, and before 393 he had translated the Psalter from the original. This excellent version did not lend itself to the already established traditions of the liturgy. We find it only in the most ancient manuscripts of the *Vulgate* and in the triple Psalters." [100] In *Altmerc's Psalter*, which is conceded to be one of the earliest versions, the Seventh Psalm begins thus: "Dryhten God min, in the ic gehyhte, gefrea me from allum oehtendum me ond genere mec." [101] In the Cambridge Psal-

95) Braune, *Althochdeutches Lesebuch;* W. Grimm, *Kurzgefasste Geschichte der lutherischen Bibeluebersetzung bis zur Gegenwart.*

96) Cook, *Biblical Quotations in Old English Prose Writers.*

97) Bede, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, 4, 24.

98) Grein, *Bibliothek der angelsaechsischen Poesie*, II and III.

99) Corson, *Handbook of Anglo-Saxon.*

100) Paues, *A Fourteenth Century English Bible Version*, X.

101) Kluge, *Angelsaechsisches Lesebuch*, 18.

ter,[102] the language is much more difficult, as the introductory verses of Psalm 23 show: "Drihtyn recyd me ond nowiht me bid wona, on stowe laeswe thaer he me yestodulode, ofyr waetyr yereordnisse yelaedde me."

A Kentish Gloss on the Book of Proverbs is very laborious reading. The glosses do not represent a connected translation and are of fragmentary character.[103] A much more satisfactory version is the Northumbrian Gloss on the Gospels, of the tenth century, known also as a fine example of an illuminated manuscript. It is variously known as the *Durham Book*, the *Lindisfarne Gospels*, or the *Book of St. Cuthbert*. The Latin manuscript from which this rendering was made dates from before 700, having been made by Eadfrith, Bishop of Lindisfarne. The glosses were written by Aldred, whom scholars have suggested to have been the bishop of Durham of that name (957—968). Another celebrated manuscript is the Rushworth Version of the Gospels, from the latter half of the tenth century. It contains an independent translation of the Gospel of St. Matthew, and glosses of those of St. Mark, St. Luke, and St. John, founded upon the *Lindisfarne Gospels*. The translation was prepared by Farman, a priest of Harewood, and Qwun, the latter, however, supplying only a few transcriptions. The dialect of the Matthew Gospel is the Mercian: "Middy escod gecenned were haelend in thaer byrig in dagum herodes cyniges heonu tha tungulcraeftga of eastdael cvomun to hierusalem," chap. 2, 1. The Lord's Prayer is rendered as follows: "Faeder ure, ther the in heofunum eard. Beo gehalgad thin noma. Cume tho thin rice. Werthe thin willa, swaswa on heofune, swilce on eorthe. Hlaf userne daeghwaemlicu sel us to-daege. And forlet us ure scylde, swa-swa we ec forleten thaem the syldigath wid us. And ne gelaet us in costungae, ah gelese us of yfle." [104]

One of the most pretentious efforts in the translation of Psalms is Eadwine's *Psalterium Tripartitum* of the eleventh century, also known as the *Canterbury Psalter*. As the name indicates, it contains Jerome's three versions of the Psalter. The version "Juxta Hebraeos" is provided with a Norman-French, and the "Romanum" with an Old English interlinear gloss. The first verses of Psalm 23 are rendered as follows: "Drihten me gerecht and namuht me wane bid, on thaere stowe fosternodes ther he me gestaethelede, Ofer weteraes gereordnunge he gefedde me," and the beginning of the *Te Deum Laudamus:* "The God we heriad, the drihten we andetted. The ecne faeder eal eorthe wurthad." [105]

About the year 1000 a version of the gospels was made of which transcripts with a Kentish tinge appeared in the late twelfth century. From their original dialects they are known as the West Saxon Gospels. Matt. 2, 1 is rendered as follows: "Eornunstlice tha se haelend acenned waes on Iudeiscre Bethleem on thaes cyninges dagum Herodes, tha comon tha tungolwitegan fram east daele to Hierusalem." [106] To the same age belongs the Regius Psalter,[107] one of eleven manuscripts investigated by Lindeloef.[108] It is more of a glossary than an interlinear translation, many of the Latin words not being rendered at all. Mention should also be made of the *Ormulum*, a paraphrase of the Gospel-stories in rhymed lines. A part of Matthew 4 is produced thus: "Forrthrihht se Jesuss fullhtnedd wass, He wennde himm intill wesste, The Goddspell seggth thatt he was ledd Thurrh Gast intill the wesste." [109]

One name stands out above all others in the eleventh century as the most striking representative of learning of his age, namely, Bishop Aelfric of Winchester, later Abbot of Cerne in Dorsetshire. According to his own statement in his *De Vetere Testamento*, he had translated the Pentateuch, Joshua, Judges, Kings, Job, Esther, Judith, and the Maccabees.[110] "His rendering is clear and idiomatic, and though he frequently abridges, the omissions never obscure the meaning or hinder the easy flow of the narrative." [111] The first verses of Gen. 1 read, in his translation: "On anginne gesceop god heofenan and eordan. . . . God cvad tha: Geveorde leoht! and leoht veard gevorht."

In the mean time, many renderings of the Lord's Prayer appeared, both in prose translations and in poetical transcriptions, of which some appear in various Anglo-Saxon collections. A thirteenth century version reads as follows: "Hure fader, that art in hevene, blessed be thi name, Thin holi heveriche mote us cumen to frame, Thi will be done in hevene and in erthe ii same, To-day us yif ure lifli bred that ilke dai we craven, And foryif us oure dettes, so strong as we hes haven, Also we don alle men that in oure dettes aren, And lede us noht in fonding, bot silde is fro harm and fro schame, And for alle kennes iveles, thuruh thin holi name"; and a Kentish Paternoster of 1340: "Vader oure thet art ine hevenes, y-halged by thi name, cominde thi riche, Y-worthe thi wil ase ine hevene and ine erthe, bread oure eche dayes yef ous to-day, and vorlet ous oure yeldinges, ase and we vorleteth oure yelderes, and ne ous let nagt in to vondinge, ac vri ous uram queade. Zuo by hit." [112]

In the fourteenth century Richard Rolle, the hermit of Hampole, the English Bonaventura, made a translation with a commentary on "The Psalms and Certain Canticles." [113] His rendering is preceded by a prolog. In his translation of the Psalms he took a verse or short section, the Latin being given first, followed by a

102) Ed. by Wildhagen, Hamburg, 1910.
103) Kluge, *Angelsaechsisches Lesebuch*, 57.
104) Kluge, *Angelsaechsisches Lesebuch*, 47.
105) Harsley, *Early English Text Society*, 92.
106) Kluge, *Angelsaechsisches Lesebuch*, 55.
107) Ed. by F. Roeder, 1904.
108) Bonner *Beitraege zur Anglistik*, Heft 13, 1904.
109) Corson, *Handbook of Anglo-Saxon*, 179. The great epic poem *Cursor Mundi*, which is placed by modern scholars into the early fourteenth century, and which paraphrases the entire story of salvation from Creation till Doomsday, also deserves special mention as a work of some merit.
110) *Anglia*, 9, 35; Wuelker, *Geschichte der angelsaechsischen Literatur*, 453; Grein, *Bibliothek der angelsaechsischen Prosa*, 1, 25.
111) Paues, *l. c.*, xv.
112) Wright-Halliwell, *Reliquiae Antiquae*.
113) *Early English Text Society*, 20; Horstmann, *Library of Early English Writers*.

more or less extensive commentary in English. The text of Rolle was later used by some Lollard scribe to attach to his own commentary, and therefore the two versions are kept apart with great care. The form of Rolle's rendering may be seen from the text of Psalm 8, the first verses of which read: "Lord our Lord, qwat thi name es wonderfull in al the erde. For lyfted es thi worchyp aboven hevens. Of the mouth of nought spekand and sowkand thou has made louying, for thin enmys, that thou destroye the enmy and the venger." The same man also made a translation of the Canticles as they were appointed for the service of the canonical hours: The Thanksgiving of Israel, Precatio Ezechiae, The Song of Hannah, The Song of Moses and the Children of Israel, The Prayer of Habakkuk, The Song of Moses, Magnificat, Te Deum Laudamus, Benedictus, Nunc Dimittis, The Song of the Three Children, The Athanasian Creed. At the same time, a translation of the Psalter was made in the West Midland dialect. It is easier and more idiomatic than Hampole's work, who exhibits too much slavishness in his adherence to the Latin original, making his rendering more of a gloss than a translation. There was finally a translation into English of Jerome's *Psalterium Abbreviatum*, the earlier manuscript of which belongs to the middle of the fourteenth century. The form of rendering is shown by the following specimen: "Lord parceyue my wordis with eres; undurstonde my cry. Take hede to the vóys of my preir, my king & my God." 114)

There are two more versions which deserve a place among the translations before Wyclif. The first is known as the *Gospel-story of the Life of Jesus*, and contains an account of the principal events in the life of the Savior in 112 sections, corresponding to the lessons to be read in churches at the celebration of the Holy Communion. The author, whose language seems to belong to the fourteenth century, evidently took the *Comes* of the *Lectionarium* or the *Evangelistarium* used in his territory, and arranged the accounts in chronological order, so as to form a continuous narrative of the life of Jesus. "The style is homely and vigorous; the Biblical phraseology is mostly retained, but the writer generally paraphrases the text, sometimes adding short explanations of his own. But little apocryphal matter is introduced." 115) A poetical version, similar to this account, is found in a manuscript based upon the *Temporale*, containing: 1) The Old Testament Story (the Creation and Fall, Cain, Seth, the Death of Adam, Noah, Abraham, etc.); 2) The Life of the Savior (Birth, Ministry, Passion, Resurrection, Ascension, Descent into Hell after the Gospel of Nicodemus, and an account of the Destruction of Jerusalem). It does not seem to have been very widely known. 116)

The other version referred to above is a translation of the Acts, the greater part of the epistles, and a portion of the Gospel of St. Matthew, also from the latter part of the fourteenth century. Two of the extant manuscripts are preceded by a prolog with an introduction to the Gospel-account from the Old Testament story and an indirect appeal that the people be taught all that is needful for the welfare of their souls: "God made mankynde aftur his owne ymage & lyknesse & put hym in paradys that was a lond of blysse." The following extract from the Epistle to the Ephesians will show the nature of the rendering: "And therefore be ye foloweres of God, as his dereste children; & walke ye in lofe, as Crist hath y-lofed ous, & yef hym-selfen for ous, an offerynge & a sacryfyce to God in a swet smellynge of softnesse." 117)

Thus these early translators, with a manifest love for the sacred Word, did their share toward making the Gospel of Christ known to their fellow-countrymen. Theirs were but feeble cries in the night, but they heralded the new and better day, when the flowers appeared on the earth; the time of the singing of birds was come, and the voice of the turtle was heard in the land, Song of Sol., 2, 12.

II.

The Principal Bible Translations Since Wyclif.

Just as the Bible translation furnished by Luther is interesting not only from a theological, but also from a literary standpoint, so the English Bible also bears the distinction of being a national book and of having been instrumental in creating the modern English language. And this is true in spite of the fact that the English Bible is not the product of a single person, but that of a whole century of labor.

The fourteenth century was a time of great distress and grievous visitations for England, just as it was for the entire civilized world. The country had been devastated by wars and internal dissension, the common people, especially in the country, were virtually held in peonage, the "Black Death," that had been introduced from the Continent, decimated the population, and poor crops and other strokes of misfortune followed in rapid succession. And in spiritual matters things looked still worse. While Pope and antipope were calling down maledictions upon each other, the hierarchy, the higher and lower clergy, lived from the fat of the land and let the people starve. All these conditions moved John Wyclif, a man that was acquainted with the life of the English people, very deeply. In spoken and written message he uncovered the abuses under which the country was groaning, and proposed remedial measures. But his greatest and most meritorious work was this, that he gave to the people of England the first complete translation of the Bible in their own vernacular.

Wyclif could not make his translation from the original languages, it being very doubtful whether Greek and Hebrew were at all known in England at that time. But he took the best edition of the Vulgate of Jerome and endeavored to render this into the speech of the English people. A large part of the work he did himself, the gospels and probably the entire New Testament. In 1382 the first draught of the translation was ready, and the "poor, wandering preachers" could now make their copies

114) Paues, *l. c.*, lxiv.
115) Paues, *l. c.*, lxviii.
116) Horstmann, *Altenglische Legenden*, 41.
117) Paues, *l. c.*, 73.

and journey forth to give to the eager people the Word of God in their own tongue. Wyclif immediately began the revision of his translation, removing unidiomatic expressions and other difficulties, and his friend Hereford assisted him with all faithfulness. When the latter was called to London and excommunicated, Wyclif and others continued without abatement. And when the faithful preacher died, at the end of the year 1384, another friend, by the name of Purvey, finished the work, which could then appear in the year 1388. All efforts on the part of the opponents to disprove the fact of Wyclif's translation have come to naught, especially through the untiring research work of Forshall and Madden. The translations which were in circulation under the name of Wyclif were prohibited in 1408, but thousands of individual copies had meanwhile been made, not to speak of the many cases in which very poor people had memorized large sections of the Scriptures as the greatest treasure of their lives. Many a soul in those days learned to know the way of life by means of the Wyclifite translations.

But the father of the present English Bible is William Tyndale. He was born in 1485, attended the primary schools and the preparatory schools of his day, and received his Bachelor's degree and later his Master's at Oxford. About this time the writings of Luther were spread in England with great zeal, and Tyndale was one of the first men to be persuaded of the truth of the great Reformer's position. Since the number of adherents of Luther at the university at Cambridge was considerably larger than at Oxford, he was matriculated there. Before long he conceived the idea of translating the Bible from the original tongues. But when he went to London to lay his project before the Bishop of London and give proof of his ability to translate from the Greek, his reception was decidedly chilly. In the year 1524, therefore, he went to Hamburg, a merchant of London defraying the expenses, and from there to Wittenberg, where he became acquainted with Luther personally.

During all these months, Tyndale was busily engaged with his translation of the New Testament, the first draught of which shows the influence of Luther throughout. When he had finished the manuscript, he went to Hamburg to receive some money from his patron, and then to Cologne to have the printing of the English Testament done. All this had to be done with the greatest secrecy, since the enemies of the Reformation were exceedingly active. Through the machinations of Cochlaeus, a bitter enemy of Luther and the truth, the matter was betrayed to the authorities. Tyndale quickly packed up plates and as much printed stock as he could find in a hurry and fled to Worms, where he had two editions of the New Testament printed by Peter Schoeffer. The precious books were then smuggled into England in every possible way, and new editions were prepared as fast as Tyndale could get the money. Meanwhile he also went to Wittenberg once more and devoted as much time as possible to the study of Hebrew. In the year 1530 he finished his translation of Genesis, in the next year the Prophet Jonah, in the year 1534 the entire Pentateuch. And still his busy hand did not rest. He was now living at Antwerp, since it was more convenient for his connections with England. But his enemies did not rest until they had managed to have him arrested and imprisoned. He found time to revise his translation of the New Testament once more and to continue his work on the Old Testament. He was executed on October 6, 1536.

Tyndale's translation, especially that of the New Testament, was made under the influence of Luther. This is shown not only in the language itself, but also in the glosses and sideheads. Of the glosses in Tyndale's first edition every single one agrees with those of Luther in his third edition of the German New Testament. The special factors which commend Tyndale's Testament are his clear, forceful language and the simplicity of the grammatical construction. In this respect his work was basic for the English Bible to this day, although after his death a period of persecution came upon his work and his friends.

Tyndale was dead, but his notes were not lost, and so his friend Rogers took up the work, revised the translation by a comparison with others, and then published the complete Bible, in 1537 or 1538, under the name Matthew's Bible. It was hailed with joy by Cranmer and other friends of the Reformation, and rapidly attained to a large circulation. But the glosses and notes did not find the approval of the hierarchy, and the fact that the work was based upon the labors of a heretic created much opposition. Upon the advice of Bishop Cromwell, therefore, an English preacher by the name of Coverdale, who was in full accord with the Lutheran doctrine, was commissioned to edit a translation which would meet with general approval. Coverdale used the following translations in preparing his own: the Swiss-German of Leo Judae of 1528—29, Luther's translation of 1522—34, a Latin translation by an Italian Catholic named Sanctes Pagninus, the *Vulgate*, and the English translation of Tyndale. Coverdale did not possess the powerful, forceful spirit of his predecessor, but he had a pensive nature and the gift of expressing the great truths of God's Word in simple and pleasant language. The expressions "loving-kindness" and "tender mercies" were coined by him. In the year 1537 this translation was ready for the printer, and it appeared on the market the next spring.

In the mean time, other scholars had taken up the fascinating work of Bible translation. Thus a nobleman by the name of John Cheke translated Matthew and a part of Mark, but his rendering is interesting only because he attempted to find an idiomatic English expression for every one in the Greek, and thus coined words which were altogether foreign to the English language. Of greater value was the translation by Taverner, which was published in 1539 and lived for two editions. His success in finding proper idiomatic expressions was greater than that of Cheke.

Coverdale had attempted to remove all objectionable features in the translation prepared by him. And yet the hierarchy was not satisfied. He therefore, together with Grafton, went to Paris in order to produce another translation. All the existing Bibles were revised very carefully by a comparison with the original languages and with the Latin Bible of Muenster. Incidentally, the attempt was made to

bring out the English idiom and to remove all hardness of construction and language. But when they were in the midst of printing, the Catholic Inquisitor of France ordered the forms confiscated. Coverdale and his associates, with the aid of Archbishop Bonner, saved as much as they could, purchased both the presses and the plates, sent them to England, and completed the work there. This Bible, known as the Great Bible, appeared in 1537 and immediately found recognition, all the more so since Cranmer wrote the introduction to the second edition, and Tunstall and Heath in later editions had their names printed on the title page. From April, 1539, till December, 1541, there appeared seven editions of this Bible, which was generally used in the churches.

During the last years of Henry VIII and during the reign of the Catholic Queen Mary little or nothing was done in the matter of translating the English Bible. But some of the Protestant refugees to the Continent, who met principally in Frankfort-on-the-Main and in Geneva and were strongly Calvinistic in sentiment, undertook to issue a new edition of the English Bible. In the year 1557 the New Testament of Whittingham was published, substantially a revision of Tyndale's translation. And in 1560 there appeared the so-called Geneva Bible, in the main the work of Whittingham, Gilby, and Sampson. In producing this translation, the plan had been to revise the text of the Great Bible by a comparison with the Latin Old Testament of Leo Judae, the Latin New Testament of Erasmus, and the French edition of Olivetan. The marginal notes were Calvinistic. This Bible soon attained to great popularity in England, especially on account of its handy size. Until the year 1611 there were one hundred and twenty editions.

But the State Church of England was the Anglican or Episcopal, as established by Henry VIII, and the marginal notes and glosses of the Geneva Bible did not find favor in the eyes of its dignitaries. Under the leadership, therefore, of Parker, Archbishop of Canterbury, a new translation of the Bible was undertaken. The work was divided so that the bishops of England did most of the translating. The purpose was not so much to consult the original tongues as to make smooth and easy reading, except in the edition of 1572, which was prepared by Lawrence. The first edition of the Bishops' Bible came out in 1568, and was immediately introduced as the Bible for use in the churches, retaining its influence for many years, nineteen editions being published till 1616. It was printed for the last time in 1619.

The ceaseless activity of the Protestants in the field of Bible translation was felt even by the Roman Catholic clerics of England, who had established a Collegium in Flanders, under the leadership of Allen. This association now determined to make a translation of the best edition of the *Vulgate* for the English people. Under the direction of a former Oxford scholar, Gregory Martin, the work was rapidly carried forward in the first years, more slowly afterwards. The New Testament appeared in 1582, the Old Testament not till 1609. The translation has a certain value, since it adheres slavishly to the Latin text. But for the same reason it is a failure from the literary standpoint, since in many passages it is impossible to follow without the original. It is known as the Rheims and Douay version, since the New Testament was issued at the former, the Old Testament at the latter city.

In England, meanwhile, the tension between the Episcopal and the Puritan parties continually became greater. Soon after the death of Elizabeth, therefore, King James I called a conference at Hampton Court to discuss the situation. One of the results of this meeting was that all agreed upon the necessity of a new Bible translation. The king had selected fifty-four scholars to do the work, but in reality only forty-seven were engaged. The translators met in three groups, at Oxford, at Cambridge, and at Westminster. Of former translations the following were chiefly consulted: Tyndale's, Matthew's, Coverdale's, Great Bible, Geneva. But other editions were compared as well, as the Antwerp Polyglot, French, Italian, and Spanish translations, and the renderings of individual men. All readings were graded and appraised according to their worth, clearness, harmony, euphony, and the work of any one group was always revised by the other groups. The result was, as one writer has it, that the Bible of 1611, the so-called Authorized Version, has become the generally accepted Bible of all English-speaking nations, exercising its influence not only in the religious field, but also in that of literature, and surpassing in this respect every other agency.

Since, however, many an old manuscript was discovered in the course of the next centuries, and also because philology had made great strides forward since the days of James I, many religious leaders of the last century thought it best to undertake a revision of the Authorized Bible. In Germany the work was done in connection with the celebration of the Quadricentenary of Luther's birth. In England a large committee was organized, which was to work in conjunction with a similar committee in America. For more than ten years the translators labored. The revised New Testament was published in England on May 17, 1881, the Old Testament on May 19, 1885. The American committee retained its organization and in 1901 issued its Standard American Version. Unfortunately, in these and other versions of recent years, the spirit of liberalism has exerted its influence, not only in the prophetical sections of the Old Testament, but also in important texts of the New Testament.[118])

---

118) Cp. Arber, *The First Printed English New Testament;* Gruber, *The Truth About . . . Tyndale's New Testament;* Penniman, *A Book about the English Bible;* Pollard, *Records of the English Bible;* Price, *The Ancestry of Our English Bible;* Schaff, *Companion to the Greek Testament and English Version;* Seebach, *The Book of Free Men; Theological Quarterly:* History of the English Bible, 7, 1; Wm. Tyndale, the Translator of the English Bible, 8, 3. 4; The Wyclifite Versions of the Bible, 9, 3; Westcott, *A General View History of the English Bible.*

Page	Column	Full Paragraph	Line	Read
3	2	1	17	*55* instead of *35*
16	2		3 from top	*he* instead of *He*
42	2	1, ch. 8	9	*14* instead of *19*
46	2	1	16, 17	*Mark 5, 1—20; Luke 8, 26—39.*
74	1	2	6 ff.	*pared. By the Law they had come to a knowledge of their sins; then the Master had sown His good seed, the Gospel of His mercy. In this way He had weeded out all earthly love and care of this world, all selfishness and self-righteousness. He still sends the fountains,* etc.
82	1	1	5	**and, He that**
82	1	1	6	**or** instead of **and**
90	1	2	6	**be loosed in heaven. V. 20. Then charged He His disciples that they should tell no man that He was Jesus the Christ.**
112	2		1 from bottom	*men*
116	1		24 from top	*love."*
117	1		6 from top	**said unto them, It is written, My,** etc.
126	1	2	2	*Spirit*
191	1		11 from bottom	*gladly*
195	1	1	19	*east* instead of *west*
225	2		1 from top	*Him*
225	2	1, ch. 11	3	*He*
293	2		13 from bottom	*master*
305	1		21 from bottom	*dry*
306	1		23 from top	*giveness as this penitent woman did. With*
348	1		13 from top	*the absurd conduct of those that undertake to be disciples of Jesus Christ without calculating what difficulties,* etc.
348	1		18 from top	*disciple of Jesus,* etc.
358	1	1	5	*seven times in a day,* etc.
367	1	1, ch. 19	9	**a sycamore tree to see Him; for He was to**
368	2		16 from bottom	*there*
471	1	1, ch. 11	27	*Luke 10, 38—42*
556	2		8 from bottom	*prison* instead of *Temple*
617	1		26 from top	*Silas* instead of *Barnabas*
630, fn. 76				*III* instead of *II*

EUROPE
ASIA MINOR
BLACK SEA
GREAT SEA OR MEDITERRANEAN SEA
ITALY
SICILY
MACEDONIA
THRACE
BITHYNIA
PAPHLAGONIA
GALATIA
MYSIA
PHRYGIA
LYDIA
CARIA
PAMPHYLIA
CILICIA
CAPPADOCIA
PONTUS
Rome
Three Taverns
Puteoli
Neapolis
Tarentum
Brundusium
Dyrrhachium
Scodra
Amphipolis
Thessalonica
Berea
Appolonia
Philippopolis
Adrianapolis
Constantinopolis
Nicomedia
Broosa
Gordium
Ancyra
Amasia
Halys
Pella
Thasos
Samothracia
Troas
Assos
Adramyttium
Lesbos
Mitylene
Pergamos
Thyatira
Dorylaeum
Caesarea
Corcyra
Lemnos
Chios
Smyrna
Sardis
Philadelphia
Antioch
Pisidia
Hierapolis
Ephesus
Colosse
Laodicea
Troglium
Miletus
Iconium
Lystria
Derbe
Perga
Tarsus
Adana
Seleucia
Attalia
Patara
Myra
Rhodes
Cyprus
Salamis
Paphos
Citium
Sidon
Tyre
Cesarea
Samaria
Joppa
JERUSALEM
Palermo
Messina
Rhegium
Mt. Etna
Syracuse
Melita (Malta)
Cephallenia
Ithaca
Corinth
Cenchrea
Peloponnesus
Athens
Sparta
Cythera
Cyclades
Crete
Fair Havens
Salmone Pm
Potmos
Coos
Cnidus
Lasea
Phenice
Derbe
Lystra
Iconium
Taurus
Seleucia
Tarsus
Adana
Derbe
Reduced from International S. S. Wall Map A.
THE WESTERN HALF OF THE
SCRIPTURE WORLD,
SHOWING
ST. PAUL'S JOURNEYS.
Paul's tour with Barnabus Acts XIII, XIV.
" " " Silas Acts XV, XVIII.
" third miss'y tour Acts XVIII, XIV.
" Voyage to Rome
Direction of travel indicated by arrow heads
Modern Names Thus - - (Malta.)
Scale of Miles
0 50 150 250

MT. HERMON
Damascus
DEAD SEA
6 Sidon
Tyre
28 Joppa
MEDITERRANEAN SEA
1 Baalbek.
2 Mt. Lebanon.
3 Mt. Hermon.
4 Damascus.
5 Beirut.
6 Sidon.
7 R. Leontes.
8 Tyre.
9 Dan.
10 L. Merom.
12 Bethsaida.
13 Capernaum.
14 Chorazin.
15 Sea of Galilee.
16 Cana.
17 Nazareth.
18 Mt. Tabor.
19 Mt. Gilboa.
20 R. Kishon.
21 Esdraelon.
22 Accho.
23 Mt. Carmel.
24 Mt. Ebal.
5 Mt. Gerizim. 26. Samaria. 27 Cesarea. 28. Joppa. 29 Ramleh. 30 Bethel. 31 Jerusalem. 32 Bethlehem. 33 Hauran. 34 Mt. Gil
35 Ramoth Gilead. 36 Mt. Nebo. 37 R. Jordan. 38 Jericho. 39 Dead Sea. 40 Moab. 41 Hebron. 42 Beersheba. 43 Gaza.

FAMILY OF FAITH COLLEGE LIBRARY
Popular Commentary.
BS491.K7 vol.1
3480400005646